












# GREAT BENIN

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UVORAMI (OVERAMI) NABESHI, THE LAST KING OF BENIN.  
From a photograph taken on board the Niger Coast Protectorate  
Yacht while the King was on his way to exile.

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# GREAT BENIN

Its Customs, Art and Horrors.

BY

H. LING ROTH.

AUTHOR OF A "SKETCH OF THE PEASANTRY OF EASTERN RUSSIA," "THE ABORIGINES  
OF TASMANIA" (*2nd edition*), "THE NATIVES OF SARAWAK AND  
BRITISH NORTH BORNEO," ETC., ETC.

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## ERRATA

Page	1.	Line 6, for Gallway read : Gallwey
„	4.	Foot Note, for <i>Ammonium paradisi</i> read : <i>Ammomum paradisi</i>
„	9.	Foot Note, last line for trade read : Trade
„	32.	Fig. 44, for Armlets read : Armlet
„	92.	Foot Note (2), first line, for Yoruda read : Yoruba
„	134.	Fig. 145, <i>Funtumia</i> read : <i>Funtumia</i>
„	173.	Bottom line but one, for hugh read : huge
„	201.	Line 4, Parenthesis should be in place of comma
„	205.	Line 16, for on an article read : of an article
„	xviii.	Bottom line, for Pit-Rivers read : Pitt-Rivers

## PREFACE

AT the time of the destruction of the city of Great Benin, we seemed to know very little about the city or the country, but its capture caused us to seek out what had once been known and long since forgotten. Our ignorance was due partly to the fact that Benin was, from the time of the first discovery, a decaying city off the great high-roads of European commerce, and partly to the obstacles placed in the way of Europeans getting there, by the natives, a difficulty in which the unhealthy nature of the country came to the aid of the blackman. The first Dutch chronicler tells us: "A man might write more about this town if he were allowed to see it, as you may our towns at home; but this is not permitted here, but is forbidden and prevented by one who is always given to attend upon you, to go with you, to show you the right way, so that no one is allowed to go alone through the town, which they say is because a stranger should not lose his way, but nevertheless one may not go boldly just as one pleases." And this prohibition with regard to the visits of Europeans continued in force until the very last. Whether such obstacles were due to the fear of the denunciation of human sacrifices and all their attendant horrors, or whether the ruling chiefs rightly feared that once a European got a footing he would soon become master of the country, as he has an awkward way of doing, matters little now; but if a city ever deserved its fate, that city was the city of Great Benin. At the same time, while we cannot avoid feelings of regret that an interesting old town and its old-world institutions should have been destroyed, the horrors which met the Punitive Expedition, when it entered the sacred precincts, showed that the little war we waged was justified beyond all expectation.

For an account of the impression the city produced on a European I cannot do better than quote the words of my friend Mr. Cyril Punch:

"Benin has an extraordinary fascination for me which I cannot explain. Having spent twenty years in the Niger Delta and Lagos back country, and visited most of the places from Bariba to Old Calabar, and surveyed them from the points of view of trader, planter, and official, I can remember no place which stirs up the feelings which the mention of Benin does. Looking back now, with later experiences of official visits to out of the way corners, with one's police or Haussa escort to take care of one, those wierd visits to Benin City simply stand by themselves.

"All the rest of West Africa that I know is squalid. Squalor is just the one idea that strikes one. Benin in the old days was more than squalid, it was gruesome. What the exact influence of the place was, or rather what the cause was of the influence felt, I cannot say, but the fact remains that no one who went there in the old days came away without being impressed.

"It may be that Benin, through foreign influence growing from a negro into a civilised town long ago and reverting to type, really gives the place its interest. One was always stumbling across traces of a deceased civilization akin to our own, yet nothing in negro nature is really akin to us.

"As a town, Benin was inconsiderable compared with places like Ibadan, Iseyhin, Shaki, Modakeke, and Abeokuta. There was no wealth, nor was there even power, except the power of the influence of fetish, and the sense of the spirit of a long past of atrocities, which, if not supernatural, were at any rate unnatural to a degree which is indescribable. I remember the return of two of Miller Brothers' men from a visit they paid to Benin after I had been there. They arrived at Guatun one evening, and showed plainly in their faces the mental strain that their visit had been to them."

In the preparation of this work I am indebted to Mr. C. H. Read for his courteous permission to make use of the exhibits in the British Museum for illustrations, and to the Council of the Anthropological Institute for the use of the blocks of the plaques in the British Museum, from the paper by Messrs. Read and Dalton in the Journal of that Institute. The photographs by Mr. Granville were kindly taken for me with a camera I supplied him with immediately after the war. To Mr. Heawood, Librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, I owe many thanks for assistance in hunting up the records of the French traders after the time of the Dutch. Dr. Forbes, Director of the Liverpool Museum, I have to thank for permission to illustrate some of the Bini articles under his care, and to Mr. J. Batalha-Reis, Portuguese Consul-General, I owe thanks for assistance in obtaining information from the old Portuguese chroniclers. To Mr. Jas. R. Boosé, Librarian of the Royal Colonial Institute, Mr. John Holt of Liverpool, and Mr. Jas. Irvine of Liverpool, I likewise owe thanks for the loan of books. Most of all am I indebted to Mr. Cyril Punch, who has been so good as to revise the information I had collected, and who, besides supplying me with valuable notes and sketches, has at the same time allowed me to choose for publication some of the most interesting of the many photographs he had taken while in the Bini country. The reader will have no difficulty in gauging and appreciating the large amount of his assistance, which was given at all times frankly and cheerfully.

TO  
THE MEMORY OF A VERY DEAR FRIEND.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE ... ..	v
CONTENTS ... ..	viii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ... ..	ix
ERRATA ... ..	iv
CHAPTER I	
THE FIRST CHRONICLERS AND THE DISCOVERY ... ..	i
CHAPTER II	
THE APPEARANCE OF THE PEOPLE ... ..	17
CHAPTER III	
CHILDBIRTH AND MARRIAGE ... ..	35
CHAPTER IV	
BURIAL ... ..	41
CHAPTER V	
CHARACTER ... ..	45
CHAPTER VI	
FETISH AND KINDRED OBSERVANCES ... ..	48
CHAPTER VII	
PUNISHMENTS & ORDEALS ... ..	85
CHAPTER VIII	
GOVERNMENT ... ..	91
CHAPTER IX	
INHERITANCE ... ..	97
CHAPTER X	
SLAVERY ... ..	103
CHAPTER XI	
COURT LIFE AND ETIQUETTE ... ..	107
CHAPTER XII	
WAR AND WEAPONS ... ..	125
CHAPTER XIII	
TRADE, INDUSTRY, FARMING, FISHING, HUNTING ... ..	131
CHAPTER XIV	
FOOD, DOMESTIC ANIMALS, FERMENTED DRINKS, WATER ... ..	147



	PAGE
CHAPTER XV	
MEDICINE ... ..	151
CHAPTER XVI	
MUSIC AND GAMES ... ..	153
CHAPTER XVII	
THE CITY AND ITS BUILDINGS ... ..	157
CHAPTER XVIII	
CARVED WORK ... ..	193
CHAPTER XIX	
THE METAL CASTINGS ... ..	217

## APPENDICES

I	
THE TREATY BETWEEN THE KING OF BENIN AND CAPT. GALLWEY, D.S.O. ... ..	i
II	
A DIARY OF A SURGEON WITH THE BENIN PUNITIVE EXPEDITION BY F. N. ROTH, M.R.C.S. ... ..	ii
III	
THE SURRENDER AND TRIAL OF THE KING ... ..	xii
IV	
ON THE BRITISH LOSS OF ANTIQUE WORKS OF ART FROM BENIN	xviii
V	
LAND TENURE AND INHERITANCE IN YORUBA, BY CYRIL PUNCH ...	xxi

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE.
FRONTISPIECE - - KING OVERAMI.	
Fig. 1. Bronze Plaque: European out Shooting .. ..	8
„ 2. do. do. : Bearded European .. ..	8
„ 3. do. do. : European armed with Matchlock .. ..	9
„ 4. do. do. : European armed with Matchlock and Sword .. ..	9
„ 5-7. Bronze Statuette: European Soldier, Sword and Rapier .. ..	10
„ 8. D.R.'s Illustrations of Head Dressing .. ..	18
„ 9. Coral Beads.. ..	19
„ 10. do. Bead Network Cap .. ..	20
„ 11. do. do. Flywhisk .. ..	21
„ 12. do. do. Apron .. ..	22
„ 13, 14. Bronze Heads .. ..	23, 25

	PAGE
Fig. 15-27, 29-31, 37. Bracelets .. .. .	28, 29, 30
„ 28. Flat Ring .. .. .	29
„ 32. Ring, double crossed .. .. .	30
„ 33-35. Pins .. .. .	30
„ 36. Whistle (?) .. .. .	31
„ 38. Pendant .. .. .	31
„ 39. Gilt Metal Shell .. .. .	31
„ 40. Pendant .. .. .	31
„ 41, 42. Ivory Armlets .. .. .	32
„ 43-45, 46. Brass Armlets .. .. .	32, 33
„ 44. Copper Armlet .. .. .	32
„ 47, 48. Two Views of Small Brass Mask .. .. .	34
„ 50. Brass Bottle.. .. .	44
„ 49. Bronze Bracelet .. .. .	16
„ 51. Bronze Plaque : Fetish King .. .. .	49
„ 52. do. do. : Fetish Chief (?) .. .. .	49
„ 53. do. do. : Fetish King .. .. .	50
„ 54. Seal of Abraxos .. .. .	50
„ 55-58. Crucifixion Trees .. .. .	51, 52, 54
„ 59. Human Entrails on Altar .. .. .	54
„ 60. Bronze Casting : Vultures devouring Beheaded Victims .. .. .	54
„ 61-4. Bronze Execution Staff.. .. .	56
„ 65. Bronze Execution Tube .. .. .	56
„ 66. Bronze Stand .. .. .	58
„ 67. Kruboy saved from Pits .. .. .	58
„ 68. Bronze Plaque : Chief holding Eberes .. .. .	58
„ 69, 70. Eberes .. .. .	59
„ 70A, 71. Brass Figures holding Eberes and Execution Staff .. .. .	60
„ 72. Juju Altar with Human Skulls .. .. .	64
„ 73. do. with Inlaid Plates .. .. .	67
„ 74. Wooden Head covered with Thin Brass .. .. .	68
„ 75. Altar with Wands and Pots .. .. .	70
„ 76. Wood Rattle for calling Attention of Spirit invoked .. .. .	72
„ 77, 78. Bronze Bells .. .. .	73
„ 79, 80. Earthenware Pots .. .. .	75
„ 81. Bronze Rattle .. .. .	77
„ 82. Metal Pot .. .. .	77
„ 83. The Malaku's House in Gwato .. .. .	78
„ 84. Juju Altar in King's Compound .. .. .	79
„ 85. Three Bronze Heads .. .. .	81
„ 86. Bronze Head .. .. .	82
„ 87. Sketch Plan to illustrate a Fetish Ceremony .. .. .	83
„ 88. Cat-fish Ornamentation .. .. .	89
„ 89. Plan of Benin River, showing Sphere of Water Spirit .. .. .	90
„ 90-94. Various Forms of Fetish Snakes .. .. .	90
„ 95. Bronze Plaque : Ukoba (or King's boys) .. .. .	94
„ 96. King's Mark.. .. .	96
„ 97, 98. Two Views Bronze Object .. .. .	102
„ 99. Sketch to show how Tusk measured to pay for a Slave .. .. .	104
„ 100. Double Gourd Quiver .. .. .	105
„ 100A. Bronze Statuette .. .. .	106
„ 101. Bronze Plaque : Gentleman on horseback .. .. .	107
„ 102. do. do. : Chief and Attendants with Shields (Fans). .. .. .	107
„ 103. D.R.'s Gourd Rattle .. .. .	108
„ 104. Court Fan .. .. .	108
„ 105. Bronze Group .. .. .	109
„ 106. Base Relief of Fig. 105 .. .. .	109
„ 107. Bronze Plaque : Chief with Kneeling Attendants .. .. .	109

	PAGE
Fig. 108. Bronze Plaque: Chief with Attendants and Shields and Ebere ..	110
„ 109. Brass Double Bell Form .. ..	111
„ 110. do. Figure with Double Bell Form .. ..	111
„ 111. Brass Enchased Stool .. ..	112
„ 112. Copper Polished Stool .. ..	112
„ 113, 114. Appliqué Work on Brass Stool .. ..	113
„ 115, 116. Wooden Kola Nut Box .. ..	114
„ 117. do. do. do. .. ..	115
„ 118. Bronze Ornamental Ada .. ..	116
„ 119. Position in which Official Cutlass was held .. ..	116
„ 120. Bronze Plaque: Official striking a Sistrun .. ..	117
„ 121. Bronze Lamp Ladle .. ..	118
„ 122. Designs on Rims of Hand Lamp (Fig. 126) .. ..	118
„ 120. Sketch Plan to illustrate Scene at Court .. ..	120
„ 124. Small Standard Lamp .. ..	120
„ 125. Large do. do. .. ..	120
„ 126. Hand Lamp .. ..	121
„ 127. Snuffer .. ..	121
„ 128, 129. Bronze Plaque .. ..	122
„ 130. Jekri Fan .. ..	123
„ 131, 132. Metal Wands .. ..	124
„ 133, 134. Metal Powder Flasks .. ..	126
„ 135. Bronze Plaque: Bringing in a Prisoner .. ..	127
„ 136. do. do. : Warrior .. ..	127
„ 137. do. do. : Noble .. ..	128
„ 138. Ivory Armlet: Soldier with Bow .. ..	128
„ 139. Powder Keg (?) .. ..	129
„ 140. Ornamentation on Fig. 139 .. ..	129
„ 141. Knife .. ..	129
„ 142-144. Hoe .. ..	132
„ 145. Axe .. ..	134
„ 146. Sketch Plan of Markets .. ..	135
„ 147. Bronze Plaque: Traders with Manillas .. ..	142
„ 148. Market Women's Tray .. ..	145
„ 149. Oboba Stream .. ..	147
„ 150. Native Group .. ..	150
„ 151. Drum .. ..	152
„ 152, 153. Details of Fig. 151 .. ..	154
„ 155. Bronze Plaque: Crocodile's Head .. ..	155
„ 156. do. do. : Native with curious Hair Dressing .. ..	156
„ 157. Abodoagmo and Family .. ..	157
„ 158. Sketch plan of D.R.'s Broad Street .. ..	158
„ 159. Scene in Benin City .. ..	159
„ 160. View of do. do. .. ..	161
„ 161. Box with Shingled Roof .. ..	164
„ 162. High Pitched Shingled Roof .. ..	164
„ 163. Street in Benin City .. ..	165
„ 164. King's Wall .. ..	166
„ 165. House in Course of Erection .. ..	168
„ 166. Ruined House .. ..	170
„ 167. Outside Corner of King's Compound .. ..	172
„ 168. Wall with Clay Figures in Relief .. ..	174
„ 169. House Wall .. ..	176
„ 170, 171. Section and Plan of Wall and Roof Timbers .. ..	177
„ 172. View of Benin City .. ..	178
„ 173. do. do. .. ..	179
„ 174. do. Ese Ado .. ..	180
„ 175. Plan of a Banyang Compound .. ..	182

						PAGE
Fig. 176.	Timbuktu Mosque	..	..	..	..	183
„ 177.	Town of Segou	..	..	..	..	183
„ 178.	Bonduku Habitation	..	..	..	..	183
„ 179.	Salaga Mosque	..	..	..	..	183
„ 180.	Sketch Plan of King's Compound	..	..	..	..	184
„ 181.	Plan of a Labadie Habitation	..	..	..	..	185
„ 182-184	Sections and Elevations of Fig. 181	..	..	..	..	186
„ 185.	Sketch Plan of typical Benin House	..	..	..	..	187
„ 186, 187.	Ivory Door Bolts	..	..	..	..	188
„ 188.	Door in use	..	..	..	..	189
„ 189.	Door Key and Bolt	..	..	..	..	189
„ 191.	Jekri Village..	..	..	..	..	190
„ 192.	Section of Ditch	..	..	..	..	191
„ 193.	Ruined Doorway	..	..	..	..	191
„ 194-195.	Carved Tusks	..	..	..	..	192
„ 196-207.	Carvings on Tusks	..	..	..	..	194, 195
208.	Carved Double Cat-fish	..	..	..	..	196
„ 209-212.	Carved Ivory Staff	..	..	..	..	197
„ 213, 214.	Carved Ivory Masks	..	..	..	..	198
„ 215.	Carved Ivory Leopard Mask	..	..	..	..	198
„ 216.	Ivory Statuette	..	..	..	..	200
„ 217.	Sobo Wooden Fetish	..	..	..	..	200
„ 218.	Ivory Statuette	..	..	..	..	201
„ 219.	do. do.	..	..	..	..	201
„ 220.	Carved Ivory Box	..	..	..	..	202
„ 221-223.	Carved Ivory Amulets	..	..	..	..	202, 203
„ 224, 225.	Carved Ivory Sistrum	..	..	..	..	204
„ 226-228.	do. do. do.	..	..	..	..	206
„ 229-232.	Carved Coconut	..	..	..	..	208, 209
„ 233-236.	Pressure Drum and details	..	..	..	..	210
„ 237.	Carved Coconut	..	..	..	..	210
„ 238-241.	do. do.	..	..	..	..	211, 212
„ 242	Top of Staff	..	..	..	..	213
„ 243, 244.	Casket and Ornamentation	..	..	..	..	213
„ 245.	Looking-Glass Door Frame	..	..	..	..	214
„ 246.	Ivory Group	..	..	..	..	214
„ 247.	Carving on Elephant Tusk	..	..	..	..	215
„ 248.	Ivory Stopper	..	..	..	..	215
„ 249-252.	Ivory Armlet..	..	..	..	..	215
„ 253.	Bronze Head	..	..	..	..	216
„ 254.	Bronze Cock..	..	..	..	..	218
„ 255.	Bronze Figures of Dwarfs	..	..	..	..	219
„ 256	Brass Jug	..	..	..	..	220
„ 257.	Staff Head	..	..	..	..	221
„ 258.	Bronze Leopard	..	..	..	..	222
„ 259.	Bronze Head of Horseman	..	..	..	..	223
„ 260, 261.	Brass Sistrum	..	..	..	..	224
„ 262.	Double Bell Form	..	..	..	..	225
„ 263.	Brass Casket..	..	..	..	..	226
„ 264-266.	Details of Fig. 263	..	..	..	..	227, 228
„ 267.	Bronze Vase	..	..	..	..	229
„ 268.	Bronze Ægis..	..	..	..	..	230
„ 269.	Degenerate Elephants Head and Trunk	..	..	..	..	231
„ 270.	Plaque : Cat-fish	..	..	..	..	231
„ 271.	Bronze Morion	..	..	..	..	231
„ 272.	Bronze Group : Women..	..	..	..	..	232
„ 273.	do. : do.	..	..	..	..	233
„ 274.	Paying homage	..	..	..	..	xiv
„ 275.	Bronze Armlet (?)	..	..	..	..	xxiv

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST CHRONICLERS AND THE DISCOVERY

- I. THE FIRST CHRONICLERS—Ruy de Pina—Garcia de Rezende—Joao de Barros—Antonio Galvano—Pecheco Pereira—The unknown Dutchman D.R.—Peter de Marees—Arthus—De Bry—Windam—Pintado—John Bird and his Company (2)—De Carli—Sorrento—Fathers Francis and Filip—Dapper—Blomert—Nyendaël—Barbot—Landolphe (Quesné)—Legroing and Balon (Labarthe) (3)—Palisot de Beauvais—King—Belzoni—Adams—Fawckner—Moffat and Smith—Burton—Jaccoliot—Cheetham and Clarke—C. Punch—Gallway—The massacre—The Punitive Expedition (4)—Roupell's Chiefs—Various publications.
- II. THE DISCOVERY—Gomez—Sequeira—Aveiro's description of city—Guinea pepper—Benin Ambassadors (5)—Missionaries despatched to Benin—Factory established at Gwato—Prester John's Crucifix—Size of Gwato and Benin—Fetichism—Juju—Bini face mark—Trading—Neighbouring peoples (6)—Large canoes—The Ijos, or Jos, Cannibals—Salt—Trading—Slaves—Elephant Tusks—Friendship with the Portuguese—Church built in Benin—List of Kings—Average reign (7)—Warri and Benin formerly one state—First king came from Yoruba—his conquests—the slave Ubini (8)—Native account of arrival of white men (9)—Their trade—Settlement at Gwato—No white women—Dapper on the extent of the kingdom (11)—Description of country—Water provided on the routes—Mythical people (12)—Barbot, Landolphe and Burton on the extent of the kingdom—Landers' references to Benin (13)—Population (14)—Cause of decay—Civil war—Vestiges of Christianity—Crucifixes (15)—Native crucifixion derived from the Holy Cross—Missionaries reprove the king—White woman marries king of Warri—Church—Relics of forgotten ceremonies.

#### I

OUR authorities for the early days of Benin City, or Great Benin, are Ruy de Pina (1440-1523, *Chronica de D. Joao II.*); Garcia de Rezende (1470-1554), whose account is a repetition of de Pina; Joao de Barros (1496-1570, *Da Asia*), whose records are evidently based on de Pina; Antonio Galvano (*Tradado, Lisboa, 1563*); and Duarte Pecheco Pereira (*Esmiraldo de Situ Orbis, 1505-1520*). Ruy de Pina, Garcia de Rezende and Pecheco Pereira were contemporaries of the discovery of the city. De Barros wrote in 1539 onwards, or more than fifty years afterwards, and is considered the greatest authority on Portuguese, African and Asiatic travels of his time; he resided for three years in S. George of the Mine (Elmina) not so very far from Benin.<sup>1</sup> After the Portuguese, we have the Dutch and other chroniclers commencing with the unknown Dutchman D.R., whose account of Benin, frequently ascribed to Pieter de Marees, if not to the translator Arthus, appears in De Bry, which I have made use of in the Frankfurt edition, 6th part, 1604.<sup>2</sup>

Then we have Windam who went out to Africa and visited Benin in 1553 (*Hakluyt ii., 2nd pt., p. 12*). He was accompanied by Francisco Pintado and

<sup>1</sup> For this list of authorities and for translations from their works, I am indebted to my learned friend Mr. J. Batalha-Reis, the Portuguese Consul-General in London.

<sup>2</sup> Pieter de Marees addressed letters to his uncle Jan Sandra, a merchant in Amsterdam; he belonged to an expedition of two vessels which left Holland November 1600, and returned 21st March, 1602. The description of Benin is by D.R. and not by P. de M.; see Tiele, *Mémoire Bibliographique* (p. 152).

Nicholas Lambert, and does not seem to have well treated Pinteado, who died out there. After them the next record is of John Bird, John Newton, Jas. Welsh, Anthonie Ingram, Thos. Hemsted, Sam Dunne, Benson, and W. Bird, who left London for Benin in February, 1588; the survivors of this party made a second voyage to Benin in February, 1590 (*ibid*, p. 128). We have after this a Capuchin named Denis de Carli mentioned (Churchill I., p. 578) as invalided home to Lisbon in 1666-7, where he shortly died, and "who had been 16 years in Africk either in the aforesaid Island St. Thomas, or the Kingdom of Benin and Overola." Then we have a reference by Merolla da Sorrento (Churchill II., p. 676) to Fathers Francis de Romano and Filip da Figuar, who were in Benin about 1682 to 1688. The next writer was Dr. Olfert Dapper (*Nauwkeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaansche Gewesten*, Amsterdam, 1668) whose work was followed by that of D. v. Nyendael (in *Bosman's Nauwkeurige Beschrijvinge van de Guinese*, Utrecht, 1704). There are other bare references here and there, but it appears to me that much of the accounts of Benin published from the time of Nyendael to the nineteenth century is more or less copied from Dapper. In the preface to his work, Bosman throws doubt on Dapper's statements; Nyendael does so likewise, plainly stating that Dapper never was in Benin, which is quite true. Nyendael's description of the city is very fair, but Dapper gives a much fuller description including much detail about the sacrifices, and there are descriptions in his account not mentioned by other chroniclers, but which have been confirmed by members of the British Punitive Expedition. Dapper's work appeared in 1668 (second edition, 1676), and in 1670, John Ogilby published his celebrated work "Africa," of which the portion relating to Benin is taken from Dapper.<sup>1</sup> In the preface Dapper says he obtained much information about the country between Cape Verde and the Kingdom of Lovango from the writings of Samuel Blomert, handed him by the historian Isaak Vossius; he mentions that Blomert's account was very full, containing a large amount of information not previously recorded. Blomert he tells us lived several years in Africa. Dapper himself did not visit Africa. Who this Sam. Blomert was is not clear.<sup>2</sup>

After Nyendael we have Jean Barbot (*A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea*, &c., London, fol. 1732) who copies Dapper without acknowledgment, but with additions of his own for which he gives no authority. He was a Huguenot, and before coming to England was Agent General of the Royal Company of Africa and Islands in America, at Paris. His biographer (*Biographie Universelle*) says he was too busy compiling the works of others to insert his own experiences. But if he had ever been in Benin, he would probably have said so. The next recorded visitor was Captain J. F. Landolphe, a gallant Frenchman who got so far as the Benin or Formosa River in 1769, and did not go up to Benin until 1778, after which date he made repeated visits. (*Mémoires du Capitaine Landolphe . . . rédigés sur son Manuscrit*, par J. S. Quesné, Paris, 2 vols., 8vo. 1823). Unfortunately Quesné appears to have mutilated his friend's MS. so that the narrative is not quite so reliable as could be wished. On one occasion in 1787, Landolphe took up with him to Benin two fellow

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages, all extracts from Dapper are taken from a translation from the Dutch which I have had specially made for this work. It is curious that in the second edition of Dapper's work the plates have English as well as Dutch descriptions, and the identical plates appear in Ogilby. I have not had an opportunity of seeing and comparing a first edition.

<sup>2</sup> In A. J. van der Aa's *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden*, Harlem, 1853, there is only one reference to a Sam. Bloemart (Bloemart), a man who distinguished himself in Java and then seems to have been lost sight of.

countrymen, Legroing and Balon, who were sent up by de Flotte, the latter being too ill to proceed (P. Labarthe, *Voy. à la Côte de Guinée*, Paris, 1803). A friend of Landolphe's was Palisot de Beauvais, the botanist, who also visited Benin (Notice sur le Peuple de Benin, in the *Décade Philosophique*, No. 12, Année 9, 1801). Beauvais who wrote the *Flore d'Oware et de Benin* (Paris 1840) gave the name *Landolphia* to the plants from which rubber is now obtained. Lieut., afterwards Commander, John King, R.N. must have visited Benin between the years 1815 and 1821. (O'Byrne's *Naval Biography*, Lond. 1849). He saw much service on the Coast and it is strange that his account of Benin should only be known in its French garb (*Jour. des Voy.*, vol. xiii. Paris, 1823). In the meanwhile Belzoni, an Italian and a well-known explorer in Egypt, got as far as Gwato, where he died on 3rd Dec., 1823, and the wooden tablet on his grave was fast going to decay in 1838. After him, we have Capt. John Adams (Remarks on the Country from Cape Palmas to the the River Congo, Lond., 1823). Capt. Jas. Fawckner, who was wrecked on the coast, visited the city in 1825 (Travels on the Coast of Benin, London 1837), and was followed in 1838 by Moffatt and Smith, surgeons to Mr. Jamieson's schooner, the *Warree* (*Jour. Roy. Geogr. Soc.*, 1841). Then the famous traveller, Captain (afterwards Sir) Richard Burton visited the city in 1862, and left us long descriptions of that visit, and of the place (*Fraser's Magazine*, Feb., Mar. and April, 1863). After Burton, the next record is that of a M. Jacolliot (*Voyages aux Rivers du Niger*, Paris, 1878) whose own account of his doings at the court had better been left unpublished; he tells us practically nothing of the city.

The traders Samuel Cheetham, Hugh Crawford Clarke, and Henry were at Guatun [Gwato] and Benin in the early sixties. Clarke wrote a pamphlet on his trip, but it was probably privately printed.

In 1885, a party consisting of Clarke, Hilliard, Coxon and Henderson went to Gwato with Vice-Consul Blair en route for Benin. Blair had fever, and the party returned without going to Benin. Blair died in Benin river the day after they returned. The Jekri people said he had been poisoned, but he died of simple *hyperperexia*. The Jekri had a most profound fear of the Binis' knowledge and use of poisons. In 1888, a party consisting of Bleasby, Bey, Farquhar, and perhaps others, went to Benin, but becoming impatient at vexatious delays, returned without seeing the king at all. In 1889, C. Punch paid his first visit taking Powis with him. He paid many visits after; on one occasion McNaught a doctor in Benin river went with him, and on another Vice-Consul Annesley and Bleasby. In 1890, Paton and Ochterton paid a visit to Benin, and later on, some others of Miller Bros., people.

The last visitor who recorded his visit before the Massacre, is Capt. Gallwey (*Geogr. Jour.* ii., 1893). Capt Gallwey made a treaty with the King of Benin which was not adhered to, and not only did the king lay obstacles in the way of trade, but he also continued his customary massacres of slaves. Several British officers made attempts at various times to get into Benin territory, but they were invariably met by armed forces, and as they were under strict instructions not to come to blows, they had in every case to retire. Towards the end of the year 1897, Vice-Consul Phillips, of the Niger Coast Protectorate, determined on a peaceful mission to Benin. This was in the absence of the Consul-General, Major Moore. Mr. Phillips, who had not been long in the country, appears to have been badly advised with regard to the expediency of the proposed mission. Messengers were sent to the King of Benin advising him of the coming of the white men. The answers received were not favour-



able, and local chiefs, especially the two well-known chiefs, Dore and Dudu, begged Phillips not to proceed. However, on the 2nd January, 1897, the Mission, completely unarmed so as not to arouse any fears or suspicion in the minds of the natives or the King, left Sapele, and on the 4th January it started from Gwato. A few hours afterwards, with the exception of Mr. Locke and Capt. Boisragon, all the white men, seven in number, were massacred, together with a very large proportion of their Jekri and Kruboy carriers. A full description of this disaster is given by Capt. Boisragon (*The Benin Massacre*, London, 1897). After this, the British Government was of course obliged to interfere, and under the command of Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, the Punitive Expedition was sent out. By the 17th of February the city of Benin was captured, and it was afterwards unfortunately destroyed by a conflagration which the soldiery was unable to stem. This Expedition has been described by Commander R. H. Bacon (*The City of Blood*, London, 1897).

In addition to the publications referred to above, a collection of notes of special interest was obtained by Captain Roupell in 1898, from the following chiefs:—Ariyo, Court Historian; Eseri, Ossa, Osuon, all Jujumen; Ihollo ii., Master Wood Carver, and Ine, Master Ivory Carver. These notes were kindly placed at my disposal at the time by Sir Ralph Moor, Consul-General and Administrator-General of the then Niger Coast Protectorate. I made use of them in my paper on Benin Customs (*Internationales Archiv f. Ethnographie*, 1898), and they have since been published in full by Messrs. Read & Dalton, in their important work (*The Antiquities of Benin*, London, 1899). Another important work (*Antique Works of Art from Benin*), was published by General Pitt Rivers (privately printed) just before his death in 1900. Prof. von. Luschan has published several papers of which, as he is preparing a big work on the subject, I need not mention any specially except *Die Karl Knorrsche Sammlung von Benin Alterthümer*, Stuttgart, 1901. Other writers on the subject are Dr. J. Brinckmann, Dr. F. Carlsen, Dr. H. O. Forbes, Dr. Karl Hagen, Dr. Fraser Heger, Mr. R. Quick, and Prof. Fred. Star. My various fugitive papers on Benin subjects are incorporated in the present work.

## II

In 1469, King Affonso V. of Portugal contracted with Fernao Gomez to discover one hundred leagues of coast every year for five years, starting from Serra Leoa (Sierra Leone). In January, 1471, some of the men employed by Gomez had reached Sa Jorge de Mina, and as on the fifth year of the contract, 1474, Ruy de Sequeira arrived at Cape Sa. Catherina, 2°30' lat. S., the coast of Benin had therefore already been examined. According to Antonio Galvao (2nd Ed., pp. 25-6) Sequeira sighted or visited Benin about 1472. Aveiro discovered (in the sense of making better known) the city in 1486, or perhaps 1482. While it is probable, therefore, that Sequeira discovered the city, Aveiro gave us the first description of it. His account is reproduced here from Ruy de Pina's *Chronica* (Chap. xxiv., *Discovery of Beny*.) "This year, 1486, the land of Beny was for the first time discovered beyond the Mine in the Rivers of the Slaver, by Joham Affonso de Aveiro who died there. It was from there that came to these Kingdoms (Portugal) the Guinea Pepper<sup>1</sup> which grew in large quantities on that land, and the samples of which were immediately sent to Flanders and to other parts, being there estimated at high prices. And the

<sup>1</sup> The Guinea pepper or grains (hence Grain Coast) were seeds of the *Ammonium Paradisi*, and were a spice not a pepper; they are closely related to the Cardamoms which are the "pepper" alluded to as from India.



King of Beny sent to the King (of Portugal) as Ambassador a negro who was his captain in a seaport known as Ugato [Gwato], wishing to have news of our lands, the people of which had been (in Beny) considered a great novelty. This Ambassador was a man of prudence and natural knowledge. He was received with great festivities and was shown many of the good things of these Kingdoms, and he was returned to his land in a ship of the King (of Portugal) who at the moment of parting presented him, for himself and his wife, with rich dresses, and sent at the same time to the King (of Beny) a rich present of things which he thought the latter would greatly esteem, also holy and Catholic advice, with entreaty to embrace the faith, and great censures for the heresies and great idolatries and *feiticarias*,<sup>1</sup> which the negroes profess in these lands. And with them then went some new Royal *Feitores* to reside there and negotiate the said pepper and other things in the King of Portugal's interest. However, as the country was afterwards found to be very unhealthy and not so fruitful as had been expected, their commerce ceased."<sup>2</sup> De Barros tells us (Decada i., Liv. iii. Cap. iii.) "Little profit came from what the King (of Portugal) did in answer to the request of the King of Beny whose Kingdom lies between the Kingdom of Congo and the fortress of St. George of the Mine; because . . . in the year 1486, the King of Beny sent to the King of Portugal for Priests who could teach him the faith. This Ambassador of the King of Beny was brought over by Joao Affonso d'Aveiro who had been sent by the King (of Portugal) to discover their coast, wherefrom he brought the first Pepper of Guinea ever seen in Portugal, which we now call 'tailed pepper' (*de Rabo, i.e.,* with a tail) because it is different from that which comes from India, the former having attached to it part of the peduncle on which it grows. This the King (of Portugal) sent to Flanders; but it was not so much esteemed as the Indian one. And because this Kingdom of Beny was near the fortress of St. George of the Mine, and the Negroes who brought gold to its market wished to buy their slaves to carry their merchandises, the King (of Portugal) ordered a new Feitoria to be established in a port of Beny called Gato [Gwato]. The King of Beny was very much attached to his idolatries, etc." The same chronicler also informs us (p. 183) that in 1540 an Ambassador from Benin brought a cross (? crucifix) from Benin; this was supposed to have come from Prester John.

In Pereira's Esmiralda, 1505, we read that there is a good road from Gwato to Benin. Gwato is a league across from gate to gate; there are no walls but there is a deep ditch all round. Pereira states he was there four times. The houses are built of sun-dried bricks covered with palm leaves. Benin, which is 80 leagues (*sic*) long by 40 leagues (*sic*) broad, is always at war with its neighbours from whom it obtains captives, whom we buy at from 12 to 15 brass or copper manillas.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The word *fetish* generally used is merely a corruption of the Portuguese *feitico*, hence *feiticaria* or *feiticismo*. B.-R.

<sup>2</sup> On this Mr. C. Punch remarks: "The country had little of real value to the Europeans. Ivory was scarce from a trade point of view, rubber was not known, palm oil and palm kernels were not much worked, in fact the latter were earmarked as 'King's trade' and were tabu. For a time slaves formed a consideration, but with the slave trade abolished there was little of value to keep Europeans going. There were professions of friendship, great ceremonies, and much fetish, and then after a time the Europeans found there was nothing in Benin to keep them there, and so time after time intercourse has ceased, and the country gone to sleep again."

<sup>3</sup> Manilla=*mao*, hand, *anel* or *anillo*, ring. These bracelets are still a medium of exchange in other parts of Africa and are manufactured in Birmingham, and sent out by the Liverpool traders. It is said that in some cases the natives are so particular that they test the manilla by its sound when struck together, which they do behind their backs, and that, therefore, the mixing of the metal has to be carefully attended to.

ways of these people are very extraordinary, he says, and he refers to many fetishes which, however, he does not describe. East of Benin, 100 leagues in the interior, there is a people with a King called Likasagu,<sup>1</sup> lord of many and possessed of great power; also another power whose chief amongst the negroes is like that of the Pope amongst us. There are then references to men who live in mountains and woods; the negroes called them Oza. Up a branch of the Formosa river, 100 leagues, there is another land of negroes called Opu (p. 72). The people of Benin are *fradus* marked with iron on the eyebrows, and this sign no other negro has but these, so that they can easily be distinguished. Five leagues up the Forcados river there is a trade in slaves, cotton cloths, palm oil, leopard skins, and blue beads with red lines which the negroes call *coris*,<sup>2</sup> which we buy for bracelets of brass and copper; these articles are sold for gold at Elmina (p. 73). The natives on this river are called Huella; further inland Subou [Sobo] is very populous; there is plenty of pepper; then nearer the coast are negroes called Jos [Ijos] with much country, who are warlike and cannibals, and their chief trade slaves and ivory. At Ramos there are people like the Jos who eat human flesh as above mentioned; there is no trade; the population is thick and there is plenty of timber; it is a collection of islands, and canoes are made out of one piece of wood (p. 74). He gives the names of the various rivers and says they are all inhabited by Jos, "who are eaters of men." At Rio del Rey the people are Jos, as already described, and all eat human flesh (p. 75). At a large village on this river salt is obtained, and the biggest boats made in all Guinea; some can carry 80 men; some come 100 leagues and more from the upper part of the river; the people bring yams, slaves, cows, goats and sheep (called *bozi*) and sell them for salt at this village. To our people they sell these things for copper manillas, more valued than brass; a slave sells for 8-10 copper manillas; one copper manilla is sold for a big elephant's tusk (p. 76).

In the collection of MSS., *Alguns Documentos*, p. 395, we read: "Durate Piries writes on 20th Oct. 1516, to King Dom Miguel: "it is quite true I am a friend of the King of Benin, because the King of Benin is a friend of all who tell him something well of your Highness . . . We eat with his son . . . When the Missionaries arrived, the King of Benin was very delighted; the Missionaries went with the King to the war and remained a whole year. The King could not do anything until the war was over as for the great mystery<sup>3</sup> peace was wanted. At the end of the year, in the month of August, the King ordered his son and two of his greatest noblemen to become Christians, and built a church in Benin, and they learnt how to read and did it very well." The letter was written during the war.

The list of Benin Kings given by Roupell's Officials is as follows:—

"The Kings of Benin were as follows, but there have also been small Kings only reigning a short time:—

- |             |              |               |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Eweka.   | 7. Olua.     | 13. Ohuon.    |
| 2. Omobesa. | 8. Ebowani.  | 14. Ahejai.   |
| 3. Ewedon.  | 9. Ojolua.   | 15. Akenbedo. |
| 4. Oguola.  | 10. Esige.   | 16. Nakpe.    |
| 5. Ouhe.    | 11. Osogboa. | 17. Akedzua.  |

<sup>1</sup> Probably this would be the Oni of Ife the holy city of the Yorubas, though tradition says the Bini came from a place north of the Niger originally, and lived under a King Lamorodu. C.P.

<sup>2</sup> To this day they say in Portugal for, to be deceived, "to get a caurina."

<sup>3</sup> ? Festival.

6. Ezoeti.
12. Ehenbuda.
18. Erizoyne or Egue, his sons were: Okenbuda, Ogegba, Omohoma, Ogichowi, Okunteshi, Ogiewuha, Egueminara, Oguomo, Oguozi, Ogieamagba.
19. Okenbuda, his sons were: Osifu, Ogebayin, Ogiogua, Edunwe.
20. Osifu, his sons were: Esemede, Iyawe, Uzamma, Ogilogun, Akembo.
21. Esemede or Erediowa, his sons were: Adolo, Odiowa, Obunwekun, Osague, Ewedoh, Ejebihen, Edulo, Iduhon, Osaboa, Eregbowa.
22. Adolo or Odiobara, his sons were: Eduboa, Orokoro, Erise, Iduseri.
23. Edubo or Overami, his sons were: Iguobasimi, Osuolele.

According to these Officials, the white men arrived at Benin in the reign of the tenth King, Esige, or 424 years before the deposition of the twenty-third or last King Eduboa. In this period there were thus fourteen kings, who, exclusive of the minor ones must have had an average reign of over 30 years. We know as yet too little of the terms of life of a negro in his native land (although an African native should have as much chance of a long life in his own country as a European has in Europe), to decide definitely that the kings did not reign so long as stated. The average reign of the sovereigns of England since Egbert in 827 is 18 years; of the Saracen rulers of Egypt, of whom there were 193 in 876 years (A.D. 641-1517) it was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years, (Stanley Lane Poole, *The Art of the Saracens*, Lond. 1886), of the Askia family in Songhai (F. Dubois, *Timboucto*, Paris 1897), it was about 11 years; from the foundation of Ayuthia in 1350 to its destruction by the Burmese in 1767, a period of 417 years, there are said to have been 33 kings, giving an average to every reign of  $13\frac{1}{2}$  years. (Chinese Rep. xx., p. 351). Landolphe found that formerly "Owhere and Benin were one Kingdom only, the present division being due to two brothers, one of whom reigned in Benin, and the other of whom declared his independence, took up arms and set up at Owhere [Warri]. Twenty years ago [i.e. about 1768] the last King was the sixty-first of this Kingdom, Those of Benin are lost in the obscurity of time" (ii., p. 60). If about one hundred years ago an exceptionally able observer was unable to trace the number of kings, it is somewhat unlikely that tradition at the present day would be able to give us more reliable information. If in about 1770 the King of Warri was the sixty-first king of that country counting from the cleavage, and taking the average ruling life of a Warri king to be the same as alleged of those of Benin, i.e. thirty years, then the cleavage would take us back 1830 years, or to about B.C. 60, which is absurd. The records of the Dahomy kings are probably as little to be relied on as those of Benin, and we may presume that there were many more than 14 kings who reigned within the period given. The list omits mention of the name of King Kambadje referred to by Dapper, who must have died about the middle of the seventeenth century, but as it appears to have been customary for kings to be known by two names occasionally, this king may appear in the list under another name. The name of Jambra, king in Burton's time, is also not mentioned in the list, nor that of Bowarre, who was king when Adams paid his visit.

According to Roupell's Officials, "The people of this country sent to Ife, in the Yoruba country for a King. Eweke was sent to them, he came with a few men, he came to Benin City; he went softly (slowly) into all the country; if the people were weak he fought with them and caught them; if strong, he talked cunningly with them; and he and his men sat down there and took their daughters to wife; then when they had children, they called their wives and children and returned to this town. When Eweka came here he found a small town, just a few houses in the part where the

white man now lives ; Eweka bought a slave named Ubini—when he died he buried him near him, and told all the world that whoever came and asked the name of this country should be told Ubini or Aiye, so the Bini people became very plenty."<sup>1</sup> The tradition that the Bini kings came from the west is curious, being contrary to the



Fig. 1.—Bronze Plaque in British Museum representing a European out shooting accompanied by his dog. He wears a hat with feather under which appears a band covering the chin and neck, reaching to the lower lip, and vandyked along the lower edge. He wears a kind of surcoat punched with a conventional design, a base [pleated skirt], knee breeches and boots. He is armed with a straight cross-hilted dagger, and holds a matchlock in his hands, one end of the long match being wound round his left wrist. He is in the act of applying the match to the priming. The dog is represented as wearing a collar (Read and Dalton, *Antiquities*). Note the miserable position and condition of the man's legs.



Fig. 2.—Bronze Plaque in British Museum representing a Bearded European. Note the curious addition of figures in the three corners of the plaque. The whole is full of detail witness to the keen powers of observation of the artist.

general rule that people drift westward. In this respect, however, the officials agree with the tradition of the people at Warri, the Jekries, who claim to come from the

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that among negroes it frequently happens that slaves reach a high position through their own exertions. This slave Ubini may at his death have been occupying a position of confidence, for it constantly happens that a negro king will trust a bought slave in preference to his courtiers ; on the fidelity of a bought slave he can rely.

west.<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that "the first capital was not Benin city as at present, but a town farther north called Ado though not the Ado now known in the Lagos colony. Great Benin up to the present time was called Ado. In the song it is said: Obubu, *eriado* Obubu—don't go to Benin; and again *Uhado*—Do you understand Bini; *Imahado*—I do not understand Bini" (C. Punch). See also Dapper *infra*.

Roupell's Officials give the following note of the first arrival of white men, presumably Portuguese :—" This is how the white men first came to Ado. King Esige or Osawe was very old and could not walk about, but all the time he could tell his boys that he was a white man when he died. So they sent messengers with some tusks as presents to the country by the big water (the Jekri country—the Benin river) where white men used to come to trade, and they told the messengers to go and salute any white men they found there and beg them to come, which they did, and ever since then white men have come to Benin. The white men stayed long, many many



Fig. 3.—Bronze Plaque representing a European armed with matchlock and sword. British Museum.



Fig. 4.—Bronze Plaque representing European armed with matchlock and sword. British Museum.

years they came to trade, and if a man comes to trade he must sit down and sell his things softly softly; they used to buy ivory, redwood, oil, gum, and slaves, but principally ivory; in return they brought guns, powder, rum, salt, cloth, and silk; then there was a different white man who used to come, but he only bought slaves; when he came, a messenger used to come before him to tell everyone he was coming, then if a man had any slaves to sell he could send to farm to get them, but he only paid a poor price; one to four bags.<sup>2</sup> These whitemen used to sit down at Gwato and there

<sup>1</sup> Granville and Roth, Jour. Anthropol. Inst., Vol. xxviii., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> At the present day, a bag of cowries contains about 20,000 shells, value about 10/-. The "softly softly" refers to the credit system which is essential to the native method of trading. See trade.





Fig. 5.

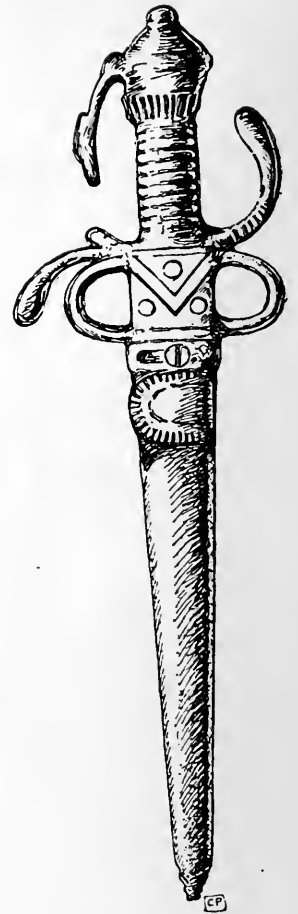


Fig. 6.

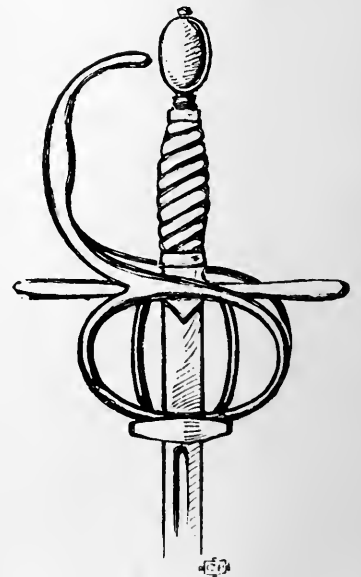


Fig. 7.

Fig. 5.—A well executed bronze statuette of a European soldier at the time of the first arrival of the Portuguese in the pose of firing off his flint lock gun. The details are well carried out, but in many points the touch of the native artist makes itself visible: thus we have the shapeless contour of the right arm and the little fusils which bedeck the man's thighs—a species of decoration, namely the dabbing of a miniature figure on to a large one, so characteristic of savage art. The sword or knife (fig. 6) carried by this military man, like the rest of the figure has every indication of having been copied from a European model and the guard much resembling a Toledo rapier (fig. 7) of the middle of the seventeenth century.

they built houses, big houses with big doors, in which they kept their goods and slaves. We never heard of these white men bringing white women here, but the King could dash (present) them for some girl to wife."

According to Dapper, "the Kingdom of Benin, so called with us after its capital, Great Benin, is bordered to the north-west by the Kingdoms of Ulkami [Alkomy] Yabu, Isago and Udobo, to the north by that of Gabu, situated at an eight days' journey above the great town of Benin; to the east, by the Kingdoms of Istanna and Forkado or Ouwerri [Warri] and to the south by the sea. How far the Kingdom of Benin extends from south to north, is as yet unknown, as some places lie at a great distance from each other, being separated by impenetrable forests, but from east to west it measures about a hundred miles [Dutch]. There are many towns in this Kingdom, whose names are as yet unknown, except a few; for many unknown towns lie at a distance of eight or nine days travelling beyond the town of Benin, near Ulkami, besides an innumerable quantity of boroughs and villages along the river of Benin, and further up country. Near the mouth of the Benin river, there is a village called Lubo, in the language of the country, and at the left hand side, another Arbon or Argon, an open borough situated fifteen or sixteen miles up the Benin river, along the bank, having about the length of a gun shot [lit., shot with a small piece of ordnance] and the breadth of a musket shot. The interior is all covered with underwood; only intersected by a few narrow foot-paths where two people cannot walk side by side. Twenty miles [Dutch] or about that, up the same river, at its main source lies a borough or village called Gotton [Gwato] as long as Arbon but broader. Nine or ten miles from Gotton, fifteen miles to the interior, lies the town of Benin, called with us Great Benin, there being no other town of that size in all these countries, and by the natives Udo. At one day's travelling from the town of Benin is a village or town called Koffo. The country of Benin is all low and covered with woods, here and there intersected by rivers, and full of morasses, but in some parts not sufficiently watered, especially between Gotton and Great Benin, where the king has ordered the people to provide travellers with water. There are large jugs filled with fresh and savoury water, as transparent as crystal, with shells put beside them to drink from. No one is allowed to take away one drop of water, except for the fixed price, which is put down by it, although there is no watchman standing near. Among other rivers, this country is watered by one called by the natives, Arbo, and by the white people, Rio de Benin, which is Portuguese, and means River of Benin.<sup>1</sup> It is situated eighteen miles more to the east than Rio Lagos, flows into the sea with a broad and wide mouth, before which lies a stretch of dry land, and has a rather good entrance for yachts and sloops, but inland, near the villages Ardon and Gotton, it gets narrow and tortuous. Near the mouth, in the middle, this river is ten feet deep at high tide. Further inland, it has several ramifications; among others, one at four miles distance from the sea, flowing into the River of Lagos." Elsewhere, Dapper mentions that the king's territory "reaches over many towns, villages and boroughs; for all around there is

<sup>1</sup> Adams called the Benin River, the Formosa River. "The country called Benin is of considerable extent, and situated principally to the north and west of the River Formosa, from which a wide and deep creek branches, that leads to a town called Gatto, where vessels trading with Benin have their factories. Craft of the burthen of sixty tons can navigate this creek to within four or five miles of the town, which is distant from the Formosas thirty-five miles; and the first dry land which appears after entering that river is near Gatto, the intermediate country being a morass covered with an impenetrable forest" (pp. 109-110).

no King that possesses so many beautiful towns and villages. Many kingdoms, as Istanna, Forkado, Yabu, Isago, and Udobo, are also tributary to this kingdom, although Isago is the mightiest kingdom indeed, and fears the King of Benin less than all the others."

With reference to Dapper's mention of Gwato, Mr. C. Punch writes me: "Gotton or Guatun or Eguatun, now known as Gwato, was not, according to the old traditions told me, the first place devoted to European intercourse, but the Ologbo Creek. There were a people said to be living between Ologbo and Guatun called Abiala, who were also said to be great witches, half men, half monkey, and that no one could go to their country. They were of course found to be quite mythical, as I naturally hunted round to find out what was meant by this curious description. Anyhow, these mythical beings were supposed to be connected with quite the first Europeans. The Aburaku had a catch phrase which was supposed to be primeval white man's talk. All the Guattos used to know and laugh at it as a great joke; but I only learnt it euphonically like a parrot:

Akakenikakeni yeva yeva  
Sickee done sickee done  
Nigara biyette

This seems nonsense, but it was evidently a saying of old time, The first line had no meaning at all and was only supposed to be how the whitemen talk, the other two lines passed into a proverb meaning 'Sick done, Sick done, Halloa, what's this sore leg come up.' In other words, 'One trouble is done. Are you sure the trouble has not broken out in a new place.'

Barbot does not speak with Dapper's<sup>1</sup> enthusiasm of the kingdom. "Its extent from south to north must be near 200 leagues, and its breadth from west to east about 125 leagues, but it is a country not easy to travel in, being for the most part very woody. The lands about Udo, the metropolis and those near the seaside, are very well peopled and stored with towns and villages little frequented by Europeans, it is also well inhabited towards Alkomy. However, although there is a vast number of people in the Kingdom, yet in proportion to its extent, and in comparison with Fida [Whydah] and Ardra, it is not populous, the towns in many parts being at great distance from each other; especially inland and near the river" (p. 356.) In Landolphe's time the chief of Benin was still "very powerful, several neighbouring kingdoms being tributary to him, amongst others that of Juda [between Patagri and Porto Novo]" (II. 62).

Burton (p. 409) surmised that in its palmy days, "the kingdom was bounded on the east by the Kwari (Niger), westward by the land about Porto Novo, and southward by the sea—its limit to the north does not appear. Two of its colonies are Badagry and Lagos, and are called by the natives Aoni, or the offspring of Ini—Benin," while according to Gallwey, forty years ago the boundary was supposed "to reach to within fifty miles of where Lokoja now stands; the south-eastern boundary is

<sup>1</sup> Dapper's description of Warri is as follows:—"About 24 miles to the east of the Benin river, another river, the Rio Forcado as it is called by the Portuguese, flows into the sea, near and about which river lies the kingdom of Ouwerre or Forcado. The river, agreeably shaded by trees along its banks, is half-a-mile wide, and navigable for a yacht drawing seven or eight feet of water. One mile inland, on a branch of this river there lies a village of fishermen called Poloma. It is an unhealthy country on account of the great heat, bad and suffocating vapours, by which people, especially foreigners coming into the river to trade with the natives, who carelessly lay themselves to sleep in the evening air or in the moonshine, are often very soon swept away."



Ethiope River. Many states pay tribute to the king. The tribute is collected yearly, the king sending his so-called war-men to collect it." Gallwey is, however, in error here for neither the Akuse people nor the Kukurukus would acknowledge the King of Benin. As a fact they were always fighting the Bini, and it was to fight them that the king was anxious to get European support and to obtain large guns.

The travels of the Landers throw just a little light on the extent of the influence of Benin and its neighbours. They tell us<sup>1</sup> when at Badagry in 1830, that during the lifetime of the late ruler's father, "and for countless ages before that period, Badagry was a province of Lagos, and tributary to it, as Lagos is and has been from time immemorial to the powerful King of Benin (I. p. 47)." They also tell us (I. p. 49) that the body of the late chief at Badagry, "like those of his ancestors had been sent to Benin in order that its bones might adorn the sacred temple at that place, agreeably to an ancient and respected custom which has ever been religiously conformed to and tenaciously held by the Lagos people." At Katunga, about 200 miles N.N.W. of Benin and about 50 from Rabba, it was expressly and repeatedly told to them "that the monarch of this empire is brother to the King of Benin, but notwithstanding this near relationship of the two sovereigns, not the slightest intercourse or communication is maintained between Yarriba and that power, so at least the inhabitants of this place [Katunga] have informed us; and the reason they ascribe for it is that the distance between the countries is too great (I. p. 176), and they were moreover told that the two kings "were of one father and one mother." During their stay at Kiama, about 50 miles S.W. of Busa, they heard that Ederesa, the rightful heir to the throne of Nouffie [Nupe] "sought an asylum with one of the chiefs of a state near the Kingdom of Benin (I. p. 234)." Finally at Wowow, about 25 miles S. of Busa, the king's head drummer, a Nupe man, told them "that canoes capable of containing 500 men in each, and having thatched houses in them are taken to Binnie [Benin] with great quantities of cloth, cotton, &c., by his countrymen, &c." (II. p. 117).

Of the connection with the distant Katunga, Mr. C. Punch makes some interesting remarks: "Katunga seems to have been the name of the old town of Awyaw of which Orangan was King. One of his sons became King of Benin and took his father's money. Another became King of Ketu and took the 'crown,' I suppose the family honours. The Oni of Ife inherited the land, but it must be remembered that Oni Ife (Kewhohas Ife) was originally the Alaffin. The Alaffin left an officer at Ife when he went to war, and the officer became Oni Ife. He became by degrees a sort of religious guardian of the royal tombs and treasures, and eventually attained a position in some ways semi-religious more important than the Alaffin. The Alaffin, however, is in my opinion the titular head of the Yorubas, and by tradition the Benin Kings descend from him."

Capt. Hugh Crow<sup>2</sup> mentions a Bini embassy which arrived at Bonny during one his visits. (p. 218). This was prior to 1812, but Crow's editors will have it (p. 190) that Benin claims sovereignty "from Bonny to Calabar" which does not seem probable.

<sup>1</sup> Jour. of an Expedition to explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, 3 vols., sm. 8vo, London, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Memoir of Capt. Hugh Crow, Lond. 1830.

As to the density of the population in the early days, the information is naturally insignificant. Dapper says, "The country is populous, and there are especially many noblemen." Nyendaël declines to call the town a city, and says it was reduced to a village by its internal dissensions. Adams between 1786 and 1800 placed the population at 15,000.<sup>1</sup> Landolphe puts the population of Gwato at 3,000 (I., p. 53) while his friends Legroing and Balon place it at 40 *cases* [compounds] (Labarthe, p. 172).

As far back as the year 1700 the city was already going to ruin. "In the beginning of my description of this city," writes Nyendaël, "I informed you of its mean state at present, that the greatest part of it lies desolate; which is indeed deplorable, for the surrounding country is as pleasant as could be wished; there is no interposing hill or wood to rudely interrupt the agreeable prospect of thousands of charming trees, which, by their wide extended branches, full of leaves, seem to invite mankind to repose under their shade. The ruin of this town and the surrounding land, was occasioned by the King causing two kings of the street [? Rios de Aros] to be killed, under pretence that they had attempted his life, though all the world was satisfied to the contrary, and thoroughly convinced that their overgrown riches were the true cause of their death, so that the King might enrich himself with their effects, as he did indeed. After this barbarity, the King found also a third man that stood in his way, who being universally beloved, was timely warned of that prince's intention, and accordingly took to flight, accompanied by three-fourths of the inhabitants of the town; which the King observing, immediately assembled a number of men from the bordering country, and caused the fugitives to be pursued, in order to oblige them to return; but they were so warmly received by this king of the street and his followers, that they forced them to return with bloody noses, and give their master an account of their misadventure. But he resolving not to rest there, made a fresh attempt, which succeeded no better than the former; but this was not all; for the fugitive, thoroughly incensed and flushed, came directly to the city, which he plundered and pillaged, sparing no place but the King's court, after which he retired, but continued incessantly for the space of ten years to rob the inhabitants of Great Benin, till at last, by the mediation of the Portuguese, a peace was concluded between him and the King, by which he was entirely pardoned all that was past, and earnestly requested by the King to return to his former habitation; however, he would not trust himself there, but lives two or three days journey from Benin, where he keeps as great a court and state as the King. The returning citizens were affably and amicably received by the King, and given honourable positions, in order to induce the rest to return, which probably they will not do, as they are very well satisfied where they are. It is therefore to be feared that the greater part of the town is still likely to continue uninhabited."

Before closing this chapter, it may be as well to make some reference to the vestiges of Christianity which have been met with, as relics of the teachings of the early Portuguese missionaries. When the city was taken by the Punitive Expedition, as Dr. F. N. Roth informed me, one brass image of Jesus Christ without a cross, about 8" or 9" long was found; also several small crucifixes about 1½" long, such as are worn by Roman Catholics. It was of these that Dr. Allman wrote in

<sup>1</sup> In Landolphe's time the population of Warri was estimated by him at 12,000 to 15,000 souls (I., p. 312). Adams writing about the same date says, "The capital of Warri is divided into two towns, distant from each other half-a-mile. The most populous one is that in which the King resides, and the combined population amounts probably to 5,000 souls. (p. 123). Rob. Norris estimated Abomey, the capital of Dahomey, to have 24,000 inhabitants. (Memoirs . . . King of Dahomey, Lond. 1789. p. 92).

the 'Lancet,' "I picked up a bronze figure of our crucified Saviour; this, with other emblems of Christianity found in the city, led me to believe that the custom of human crucifixions, as practised by the natives, was derived from the representations of the Crucifixion of our Saviour, introduced probably, by the Portuguese."

As we have seen above from the old Portuguese chroniclers, the discoverers christened many natives, and built a Christian Church, but the seeds of the Christian religion do not appear to have found a congenial soil, for in or about 1686, that is long after the first appearance of the Dutch, we find Portuguese missionaries reproving the King of Benin for permitting human sacrifices at "the making of the father." Gallwey is, of course, in error when he states (p. 128) that Christianity has never yet reached this country.

At Warri, the missionaries appear to have been more successful than in Benin, though succeeding travellers give evidence of continuous falling away. According to Father Jerom Merolla da Sorrento (Churchill I, p. 676), Vice-Superior Father Angelo Maria d' Aiaccio [Corsica] and Father Bonaventura da Firense [Florence] requested the king to cause his subjects to be properly married, and not allow them to go about naked until they were marriageable. The king's acquiescence was made conditional on their obtaining for him a white woman for a wife, so they obtained a young Portuguese lady from the island of St. Thomas. The king married her, and his subjects reformed. About this time, there was another missionary in St. Thomas, who visited Warri every six months to baptise the people, for doing which he obtained two slaves.

Dapper says of the religion of the people of Warri, "they have nearly the same customs [as the Bini], but they do not sacrifice so many men and cattle, considering it a cruel deed, and the devil's work; so that these people could be converted to Christianity with a little teaching. Neither are any Fetizeros or devil-charmers allowed in the country, nor do people poison each other so easily as in Benin. The natives and even the King keep a little to the Roman Catholic religion. There is a church with an altar in the town of Ouwerre, with a crucifix with the images of Mary and the Apostles, two candlesticks standing beside them. The blacks also enter this church with the *paternoster* continually in their hands, like true Portuguese, reciting them with other popish prayers. They are outwardly very religious, and can read and write, being very fond of Portuguese books, pens and paper." At Warri, writes Landolphe, "In the middle of a large square, we observed a cross covered with about fifty church lamps, which had been erected by the Brasil missionaries, who had baptised the then king, under the name of Manual Otobia. The reverend father built him a beautifully carved chapel, representing the crucifixion and the holy women" (II., p. 37). It was at Warri too, that Lieut. King "found in this kingdom evidences of the Roman Catholic religion, which has been introduced by the Portuguese. At Christmas, he saw a procession going from the town to a small village, which carried a crucifix and other emblems of Christianity." Lieut. King was at Warri about the same time as Capt. Adams, whose account reads, "On entering the first apartment of the palace, we were much surprised to see, placed on a rude kind of table, several emblems of the Catholic religion, consisting of crucifixes, mutilated saints, etc. Some of these articles were manufactured of brass, and others of wood. On enquiring how they came into their present situation, we were informed that several black Portuguese missionaries had been at Warre, many years since, endeavouring to convert the natives into Christians; and the building in which they performed their mysteries, we found still standing. A large wooden cross, which had

withstood the tooth of time, was remaining in a very perfect state, in one of the angles formed by two roads intersecting each other. We could not learn that the Portuguese had been successful in making proselytes; indeed, King Otoo's subjects appeared to trouble themselves very little about religion of any kind."

At Warri, too, Burton (p. 153) "caught sight of a tall crucifix close to Ebewa's [an influential trader's] house. It still bore a crown of thorns, in bronze, nailed to the centre where the arms meet the body, and a rude M of the same material was fastened to the lower upright." Burton thought the monks' good work lived after them, for he adds "At Warri, we saw none of the abominations which afterwards met our eyes in the city of Benin." There is probably some truth in his argument, but it must be remembered that Warri lies near the sea, is very accessible to foreigners who object to human sacrifices, and hence the hold on a people of such customs where they exist would naturally be weakened, for it is to be hoped there are not many Europeans who encourage murder as did M. Jacolliot's friend (p. 297).

Lieut. R. K. Granville tells me that "At Big Warri, a Jekri will take you to see what the monks did; there is nothing to be seen except a large open common covered with grass very like a European sward, and curiously enough at Benin city there is a similar common covered with the same grass,<sup>1</sup> only much larger." Was the locality shown to Granville a place where a crucifix had once stood, as seen by Adams and Burton, and was the Benin sward the site of the church built by the Portuguese in 1516?

With regard to this survival of missionary work I may add what Mr. Punch writes me: "They used to have services in the Malaku house at Eguatum [Gwato], and they were very like the Roman Catholic Church services. A congregation which, as in other places, contained an unduly large proportion of women and children assembled in the Malaku house. The Ahuraku sat in a carpet covered chair, and drawled or intoned prayers, occasionally ringing a bell and rattling a stick. The congregation chanted responses."



Fig. 49.—Bronze Bracelet, 3 in. (760 cm.) diam.  
Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

<sup>1</sup> "This was probably *Panicum horizontale* and is indigenous. There is a good deal of Dub grass (*Cyanodactylon* Sp.) in West Africa but it has been imported, and in so far as I remember was not to be found in Benin." C.P.

## CHAPTER II

### THE APPEARANCE OF THE PEOPLE

Old records silent—Fine physique—Good carriage—No deformities—Women not equal to the men—Burton considers women graceful (18)—Bini ambassadors at Bonny—Albinos—Hair dressing (19)—Old illustrations—Plaiting—Oiling—Coiffure lasts three years—Various fashions—Artificial tresses (20)—Matted hair—Shaven polls—Varieties of dress—Clothing of rich and poor (22)—Upper portion of body nude—Dress of rich women and poor women—Comparison with Wydah and Gold Coast—Dress of a court official (23)—Ample kilts (24)—Young people naked until clothed by the king—Feast when clothed—Nakedness at court—Men clothed and wived at same time—Women clothed and married—Coral necklaces the only dress—Copper bangles—Coral necklaces—Iron rings—Brass bracelets—Cowrie garters—Shark's teeth (25)—General use of coral—Coral worked into hair—Fiadors coral necklaces—Burton's notice of coral collar (26)—Chiefs covered with a profusion of coral—King's coral net—King's coral belt, etc.—Valuable coral gifts—Origin of the coral—Use of coral on the West Coast—Variety of personal ornament (27)—Play upon patterns—Agate insets—Fetish bracelets—Copper tubes—Curious finger ring—Glass inset; no enamel—Porpoise-like pendant—Gold plated ornaments (30)—Curious connecting ring—Armlets and leglets—Native and European figures—Fertility in design—Cicatrization (33).

OF the physical characters of the people the old chronicles naturally tell us very little. Dapper says, "The men are finer in stature than the women." On the road to Benin, Fawckner writes, "I was at once struck with the person of the chief; his stature, mien and deportment at once bespoke him to be a ruler and governor. He was about five feet nine inches high, his limbs well formed, and of beautiful proportions. He was surrounded by many of his people, who were all like himself, well made, robust, and of the most exquisite symmetry, differing only from him in complexion, theirs being of the blackest jet and glossy as ebony, whilst his was a paler and more subdued satin, approaching to that of an American Indian; which contrasted with his pearly teeth, well formed mouth, and over-arching brow, beneath which his small dark eye darted forth an eagle glance of scrutiny, forming a countenance well calculated to inspire a beholder with profound dread, if ever he had previously heard of the character of the man." (pp. 55-56). And later he says of the people "they are as black as jet, but the boldest and finest race of people we saw in the country. Few are less in stature than five feet nine inches; their carriage is erect and graceful in the extreme, and we never once saw a deformed person among them; on the contrary we noticed several pre-eminently remarkable for their symmetry. One in particular, whom, by way of distinction, we used to call 'the handsome man,' was fully entitled to that appellation. He was about twenty-two years of age. His features seemed cast more in the European mould, being interesting and well proportioned; his teeth were regular and of pearly whiteness; small feet and knees, and a well-formed leg; when walking he used his sword as a stick, and with his gun resting on his right shoulder, he presented an unusually graceful appearance, and would have been an excellent model for the pencil of the artist, or chisel of the sculptor. This character applies only to the men; the women fall infinitely below them in respect of personal beauty and proportion their bodies are, moreover, tattooed

with various grotesque figures, and distinguishing marks, which combine to render them very inferior to their lords in graceful comeliness." (pp. 64-65).

Crow, at Bonny, saw two Bini men, said to be relations of King Pepple at Bonny, who had come as ambassadors from Benin. He describes them as "two remarkably fine looking men of from thirty to forty years of age, well-formed and about six feet high. Their looks and manner were of a superior order, and they walked in majestic style . . . I never met with any black princes so sensible and well informed as these men, who had so noble and commanding an appearance." (pp. 218-9).

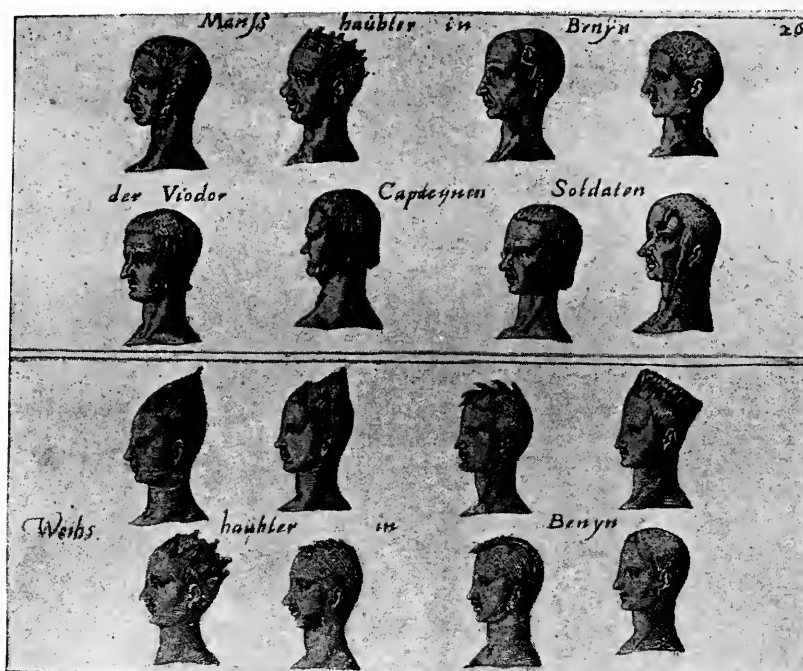


Fig. 8.—Set of profiles illustrating methods of coiffure from the plate accompanying D.R.'s account in De Bry. The four on the top row represent those of Bini women; the first on the second row that of a Viador, the next that of a captain and the following two those of soldiers; the eight below the double line represent those of women. It is doubtful as to whether these sketches are from life, but the coiffurs of the third on the third line and the very similar one of the second on the fourth line are like the Sobo women's head-dress of the present day. It is very doubtful, however, as to how far or whether at all these illustrations can be taken as authentic.

According to Burton, "The wives and daughters of freemen had olive-coloured skins, tolerably regular features, with splendid eyes, and in some cases tall graceful figures and drooping shoulders, a formation never seen amongst the Guinea or Gullah nigger." (p. 410). Mr. Cyril Punch tells me that "in spite of the disgusting atrocities of the place, of the poverty and general decadence of Benin, I must say the Benin type of features was distinctly more refined than any other negroes in West Africa. They were lighter in colour, and the features were much cleaner cut. The Ojomo [a very high official] for instance, had refined, almost intellectual features, and most dignified well-bred manners." At Gwato Burton found "the men are rather a fine race, tall and muscular; many are very powerful." (p. 280).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of the Warri people Dapper writes: "The men are beautifully built, and so are the women, who are rather pretty according to the ideas of beauty prevalent in this country."



Landolphe saw a partial albino with "his skin covered with variegated patches about the size of lentils, with fair hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes." (II., 83). Fawckner also saw an albino whose father and mother were both black. His head was shaved to the crown, where a small tuft of white wool was allowed to grow just like

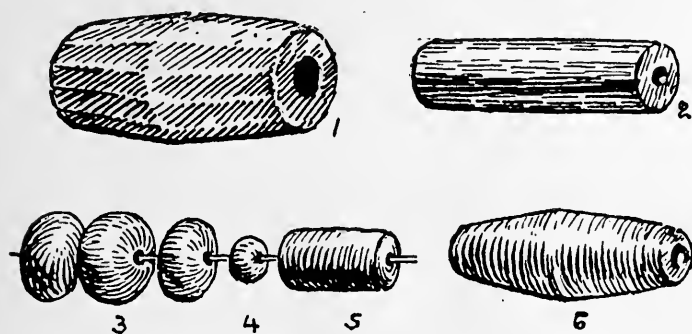


Fig. 9.—1. Coral bead,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. (380 mm. long.  
2. Agate bead,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. (380 " ) "  
3. Coral bead,  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (95 " ) "  
4. Coral bead,  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (63 " ) "  
5. Coral bead,  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (160 " ) "  
6. Coral bead,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. (318 " ) "  
Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

that on the back of a lamb, or the tail of a white poodle dog; his eyes were of a beautiful pink, and shaded with a light brown eyebrow. The light affected his sight in a considerable degree, and he was unable to see clearly during the middle of the day. He was the only one of such singular peculiarities noticed in the town, "although I met several persons, perhaps equally curious, whose bodies were covered with spots of black, white or brown." (pp. 86).<sup>1</sup> Aguramassi bragged to Mr. Punch

of the strength of the Bini men, but Mr. Punch challenged him to produce a man who could lift the brass stool (*see* illustration) over his head; several of his men tried and failed. Mr. Punch had a very big Krooman named Selby who lifted the stool easily.

The first recorder, D. R., tells us "they cut their hair in many and various ways, almost every individual having something special," and he supports his statement by profiles showing a variety of methods of head dressing, which are reproduced. Some of the head dressing is that followed by the Sobos at the present day.

Dapper describes the hair dressing of the women only; he says they "make up their hair in an elegant fashion and plait it in the shape of a wreath on the top of their heads; dying one half black, and the other half red."<sup>2</sup>

Nyendaël says "The men don't curl or adorn their hair, but content themselves with letting it grow in its natural way, except plaiting it in two or three places, in order to hang a large piece of coral on to it; but the women's hair is very artificially turned up into large and small plaits, and divided on the crown of the head, like an inverted cock's comb, by which means the small plaits are evenly arranged. Some

<sup>1</sup> Albinos seem to be specially selected for sacrifice. Hutchinson (Impressions, Lond. 1858, pp. 98 & 103) says that they were sacrificed to the surf juju, to bring European ships to Brass and Duketown, and Cole (Life in the Niger, Lond. 1862, p. 13) says an albino is killed at any peace ceremony at Abo. "The Jekris used also to make *Malaku*. The chiefs in their War Canoes went down to the mouth of the river and there threw into the water an albino boy and girl. In later times a goat took the place of a human being but the custom was kept up every year." (C. Punch).

<sup>2</sup> Of the Ijos, Burton says: "Those were a wild looking race, black, muscular, scantily clad, and with little lumps of wool protruding from their heads, sometimes like ragged balls of worsted, sometimes like bear's ears and thrum mops, sometimes like a saintly glory. They are lineal and worthy descendants of the robbers or pirates of Usa. . . . The skin is mostly black; some, however, are fair and reddish, a thing everywhere to be observed among Nigerian tribes. Though the aspect of the men is savage and staring, the women are not unfrequently pleasing, the eyes especially being large and well formed, clear as onyxes, and fringed with long upcurling lashes which this tribe does not remove" (pp. 138 and 147).

divide their hair into twenty plaits and curls, according as it happens to be either thick or thin. Some oil it with the oil which they roast out of the kernels of oil-nuts, by which means it loses its black colour, and in process of time turns to a sort of green or yellow, that they are very fond of; notwithstanding which, in my opinion, it looks hideous;" thus somewhat endorsing D. R's illustrations. The courtier who interviewed Fawckner had his head shaved all over, with the exception of a circular spot on the crown from which a small tuft was still permitted to grow." (p. 82). Landolphe found "the women are all very coquettish; they take six months to do their hair, and the coiffure lasts three years. The number of beads and corals woven into their hair is infinite." (II., p. 52).

At Gwato, speaking of the women, Burton remarks: "their head dresses rather tend to enhance their ugliness. The great novelty is in the habit of shaving a hand's-breadth from the forehead to the crown, leaving bear's ears on the sides of the cranium, or wool collected in straggling and irregular lumps. A better style is to

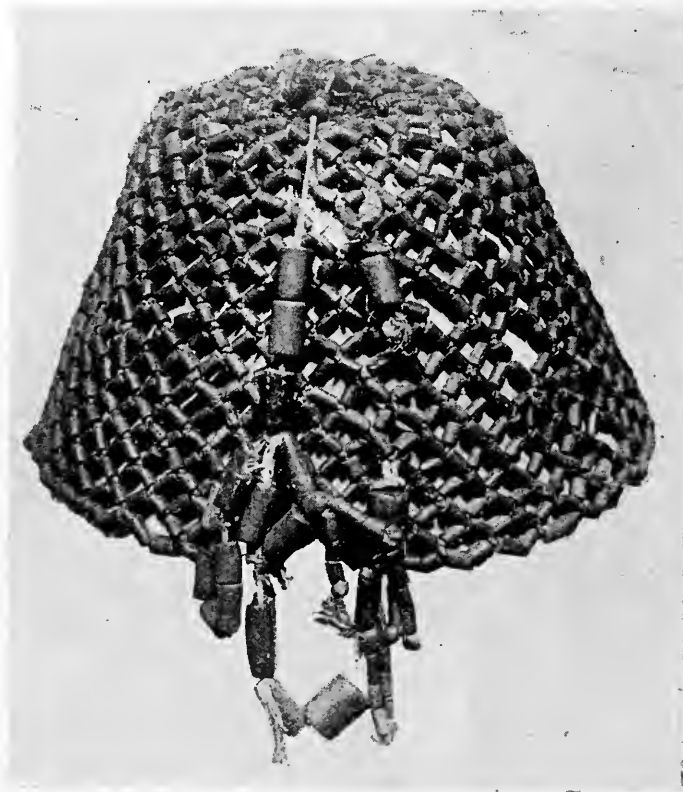


Fig. 10.—Cap of a network of coral beads with a kind of tassel of larger beads at one side. Diam. 9½ in. (25 cm.) British Museum.

tie the hair, which often will reach the shoulders in a knot *à la Diane*, with beads, gold ornaments, and bits of coral interwoven; it would be tasteful but for the venerable-looking shaven scalp above. Some have false elf locks streaming down their faces, others, artificial tresses extending to the mid-leg, ribbon shaped, and so greasy that they appear to be leather; both these coiffures belong to the Fetish women, or *béguines* [devotees]. A few wear flat pieces of hair along the sides of the head: they look like black cakes, with excess of oil or fat, and I cannot imagine how



they are ever undone; it beats *plica palonica*"<sup>1</sup> (p. 280). Later on he describes the head dress of a chief's wife at Gwato thus: "Her hair a little shaved off the pole, was collected behind into a huntress's knot, which was divided into four large bunches, with three smaller along each side of the head from the occiput to the temples. These knots were defined by beads of brass and coral, and a long metal scalp-scratcher, like the bodkin of a *Trasteverina*, bisected the black hair." (p. 418). The shaven heads of the women evidently distressed Burton, for he says; "The peculi-

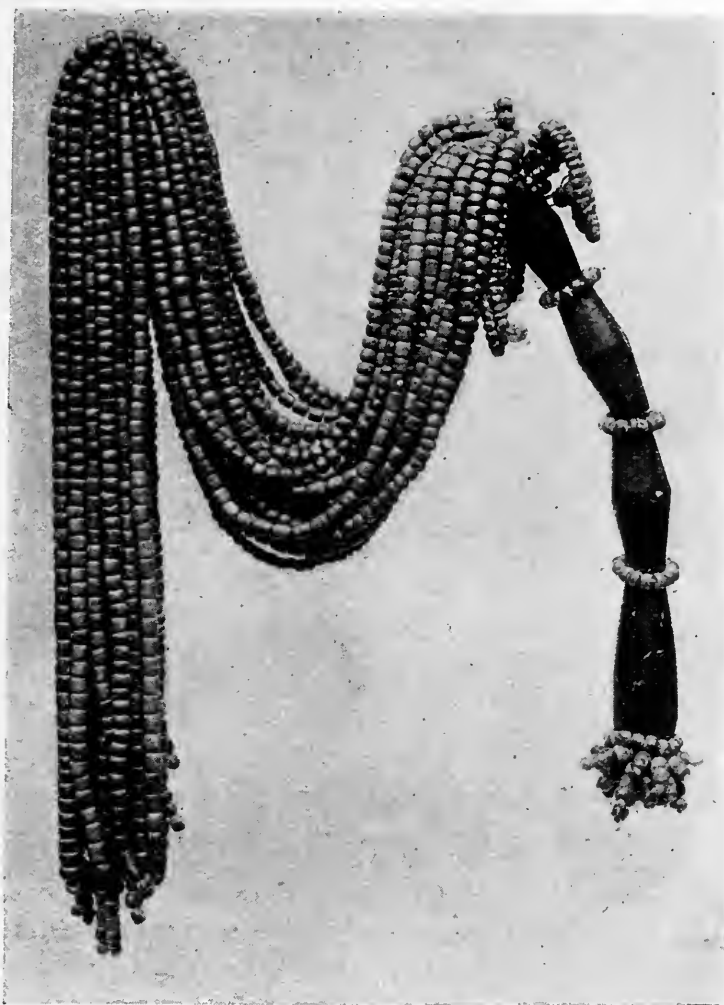


Fig. 11.—Fly Whisk said to have belonged to the King of Benin, formed of coral beads with a handle of four large beads of red jasper. Length 39½ in. (1 m.) Messrs. Reed and Dalton find a resemblance in the jasper beads to the long cornelian beads which were exported from Europe for use in the slave trade. British Museum.

arity of the shaven head gradually wore off: it seemed at last like a large forehead leading to the jetty black hair, which was collected into one or more bunches." (p. 410)<sup>2</sup>

The individuality of the Bini in hair dressing was also conspicuous in their clothing. D. R. says: "They have many strange varieties of clothes, of which not

<sup>1</sup> A diseased state of the head, in which a secreted fluid mats the hair.

<sup>2</sup> At Warri, according to Dapper, "They may wear their hair short or long as they like it." "The Ijos' style of hair dressing is very wild. Some wear thrum-mops, others long and crooked horns of matted, plaited hair, others, knobs of wool irregularly disposed over the surface." (Burton, p. 147).

one is similar to another, but all are made of cotton, over which they ordinarily wear a Holland cloth [*leinwat*].” Dapper’s account runs as follows: “Their dress is nearly the same as that of Ardez, for they wear, that is to say the richer people do, two, some even four garments, the one shorter than the other, the one over the other, worked with the needle so that the under garment is visible through the upper one. As to the poor people, they only wear a single piece of cloth over their naked body. The women wear on the lower portion of their bodies, a blue skirt reaching to the ankles, and some wear small pieces of cloth across their breasts, while they wear copper bangles round their arms.”

According to Nyendaël, “The dress of the negroes here is neat, ornamental and much more magnificent than that of the negroes of the Gold Coast. The rich

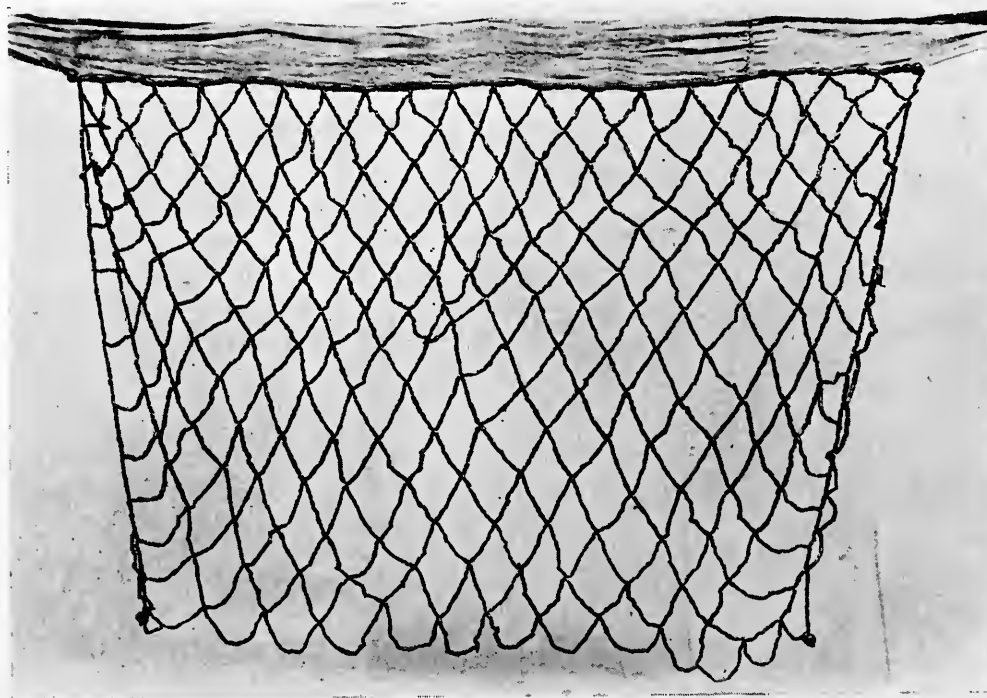


Fig. 12.—Coral Bead Apron, 16 × 27½ in. (40 × 70 cm.) British Museum.

amongst them wear, first, a white calico, or cotton cloth, about one yard long, and half as broad, which serves them as drawers; over that, they wear a finer white cotton dress, that is commonly about sixteen or twenty yards long, which they wind very neatly round the middle, casting over it a scarf of about a yard long, and two spans broad, the end of which is adorned with fringe or lace, which is somewhat like that of the female negroes on the Gold Coast. The upper part of their body is generally naked. These are their clothes in which they appear abroad, but at home they wear only a coarse *paan* (loincloth)<sup>1</sup> instead of drawers, covered with a large coloured grass woven cloth, which they wear like a cloak. The meaner sort go dressed similarly, but the stuff they wear is much coarser; and whether fine or coarse every one is governed by his circumstances. The wives of the great lords wear calico *paans* woven in this country, which are very fine, and very beautifully checked with various colours. These *paans* or cloths are not very long, and are tucked in at the side like

<sup>1</sup> See Trade.

those which are worn at Fida [Wydah] but with this difference, that while the Fidase [Wydah] paan is open in front, this, on the contrary, is open behind, or on one side, and closed in front. The upper part of their body is covered with a beautiful cloth, about a yard long, instead of a veil, like that which the women wear on the Gold Coast. The poorer women and men differ in dress from the rich only in the quality of



Fig. 13.—Bronze head showing coral head gear and the stiff collar mentioned by Burton. Height 13½ in. (340 mm.) Liverpool Museum.

their garments.” Of the dress of the women, Burton says: “In all cases the bosom was bare. The dress was a *pagne* or loincloth.” (p. 410).

A court official is thus described by Fawckner (p. 82): “He was curiously habited, wearing a sort of short petticoat from the waist down to the knees, composed of a cloth very much valued by them, resembling our white bunting. This encircled his loins; and set off like an ancient dame’s hooped petticoat; the upper part of the body was naked, as well as the legs and feet; his neck was ornamented with strings of red coral. In his hand he held a fan made of leather, to keep off the flies, and protect him from the rays of the sun. His head was quite as unprotected, being shaved all

over, with the exception of a circular spot on the crown, from which a tuft was still permitted to grow. Such was the personage who brought the king's service."

While on the road to Benin, Burton noticed the people began to wear the "Beluko, or regular Highland kilt of broad-cloth, serge, or native material. The poor have no other garment; those aspiring to swelldom twist around it all manner of cloths, from fine muslin to thick calico, and produce a prodigious domework. In Benin, the perfect figure of man is light built and nude to the waist, whilst all below the skirts fills out with more amplitude than crinoline; it is exactly the shape of a handbell" (p. 283).<sup>1</sup>

There are some curious statements about the requirements of royal permission before the people are allowed to wear clothing. Thus D. R. tells us: "Maidens and boys all go perfectly nude<sup>2</sup> until they marry or are otherwise disposed of, or that the king grants them license to put on some ornament or dress; then they become very cheerful and rejoice very much at the friendship and benevolence of the king which he has shown and proved to them; they then ornament and bedeck their bodies to the utmost, paint and daub themselves with white earth or colour, and hold a great festival; they sit in their houses in great splendour and magnificence, and many people then come to them and congratulate them as if they were a bride." So too, according to Dapper, "No man is allowed to wear any dress at all at court before he has been clothed by the king; nor let his hair grow before this has been done. There are men at the King's court, twenty and twenty-four years old, who, without any semblance of shame go about naked, only wearing a chain of corals or jasper round their necks. But when the King gives them clothes, he usually presents them at the same time with a wife, thus making them from boys to men. After this time they always wear clothes and let their hair grow without being obliged to shave it off with a knife any more. Likewise, the women are not allowed to wear clothes, unless they have been provided with them by their husbands. So you can see there, women of twenty and twenty-five years going along the streets perfectly nude without showing any shame. But when the man wishes to clothe her he has a house built for her, and cohabits with her, as with the other wives." Nyendaël echoes this: "Almost all the children go naked; the boys till they are ten or twelve years old, and the girls till they arrive at puberty; till then they wear nothing but some strings of corals twisted about their middles, which is not sufficient for purposes of decency."

We have seen above Dapper's reference to copper bangles worn by women round their arms. Nyendaël also refers to them: "The women wear necklaces of coral very nicely arranged, their arms are covered with bright copper or iron rings as are also the legs of some of them, and their fingers are as thickly crowded with copper rings as they can possibly wear them." Speaking likewise of the women, Burton records: "The favourite ornaments were some threescore iron rings, some of them wires, others of heavier make round their left wrist; on the right was a twist of brass, or a broad arabesque Benin bracelet; whilst under the knee a garter

<sup>1</sup> According to Dapper, at Warri the native's dress is like that of Benin, "but they also wear some fine cotton or silk clothes (which those of Benin are not allowed to do) as large as small sheets, fastening them above the navel, with a cunning knot under the arms."

<sup>2</sup> In Mr. C. Punch's time, parents used voluntarily to give their boys to the king. They then went naked, but had a brass anklet to show they were king's property. They were not at once taken to the king's quarters.

of small Indian cowries set off the leg." (p. 410). At Gwato he refers to shark's teeth as a chief's wife's ornament. (p. 419).<sup>1</sup>

The use of coral, or what passed for such, and beads seems to have been extremely popular in the Benin country. Adams (p. 111) found "coral a very favourite ornament in the royal seraglio." The War Captain's wives in Beauvais' time had coral worked into



Fig. 14.—Bronze head showing coral head gear and the stiff collar mentioned by Burton. Height 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (340 mm.) Liverpool Museum.

meshes of hair (p. 147). He also mentions fiadors of one, two, and three row coral necklaces distinguishing their rank, and the War Captain wearing a three row neck-

<sup>1</sup> Of the Ijos, Burton says: "The dress of the men is the usual loin-cloth; their wives add to it an upper veil, which is thrown loosely round the shoulders. The favourite ornament in this part of the world is coral; not in beads, but in long pieces like bits of 'churchwarden' stem [long clay pipe stems]. A string of these articles is a regal present. The darker the colour and the larger the piece, the better, and a good bunch will fetch a puncheon or two of palm oil. Other ornaments are big pewter bracelets, or brass after the Benin fashion, huge rings of rudely cut ivory round the wrist and ankles, wire collars, and thin ropes of braided seed-bead, especially blue, various large porcelain beads, small linked brass chains round the ankles, and strings of Indian cowries. Children's legs are girt with small brass bells, probably for fetish reasons." (p. 147). Later on, (p. 157) he complains of "their barbarous hankering after the cast off finery of Europe."

lace. The 'big men' seen at a court function by Burton had each "his anklets and collar of coral, a very quaint decoration, composed of pieces of about one inch long, and so tightly strung that it forms a stiff circle about a foot in diameter." This method of wearing the coral is shown on the large bronze heads and plaques. Fawckner makes frequent references to the coral ornaments. At Mongwe, where he was shipwrecked, he tells us, "the chief's head was covered with coral beads, thickly strung on his black curly wool; his neck, ankles, and wrists were also encircled with a profusion of strings of coral. Some of the natives who had come with him, had a single string round their necks" (p. 5). At Gwato (*ibid* p. 71) "the chiefs wore coral round the neck, arms, and wrists, but none on the head as we first noticed at Yarcella." Landolphe says of the king, "his neck, arms and ankles were surrounded by a quantity of large strings of coral. On this occasion he wore a net shirt of which each knot was furnished with a coral bead; it weighed more than twenty pounds, for the king made me test it" (II. 59). Besides the necklace which the king wears on state occasions, he also wears a belt of coral (Fawckner.) Burton speaks of the coral bracelets which "adorned" the King's wrists. Every heir to the throne in his father's life time had to make for him a coral hat and vest, and Adubowa showed Mr. Punch the ones he had made for Adola. Mr. Punch does not think that any of the articles enumerated above by Fawckner, Landolphe, etc., were coral: a chain of European coral was worn round the neck, but the official rings of beads on wire worn by king's boys, etc., were of the Benin agate.

During one of Landolphe's visits to Benin, he gave the War Captain a string of coral worth 300 francs (£12), and some French officers gave the king a big string worth 1800 francs (£72) (II., pp. 42, 93). The wearing of coral was a royal privilege, which the king conferred on his subjects.<sup>1</sup> Where the office of the holder was not hereditary, as for instance, with the fiadors, the bunches of coral had to be returned to the king on the holder's decease (Landolphe II., p. 53). According to Bold, coral beads "are the intrinsic treasures of the rich, being held in the highest estimation, and from their rarity, are only in the hands of a few chiefs, whose avidity for them is immeasurable; the species admired are the pipe beads of various dimensions, and are valued at ten large jars of oil an ounce, of the smaller sort, and so on in proportion for the larger sized." Mr. Punch informs me that "as a matter of fact, the King of Benin had few, if any, of the large coral beads such as Nana, Doré, Dudu, and the Jekri chiefs obtained from the merchants in Benin River. His coral was insignificant pipe coral, and was only striking when made up into vests and hats. The Binis valued more the agate beads, and especially the dull kind. A necklet of this dull agate was a king's gift, and no one could wear such a necklet, unless it were given him by the king. It was death, in fact, to wear it otherwise. The shiny chrystalline agate, with white quartz veins, anyone could use. Such coral as the Binis had was obtained through Jekri traders, either from the Benin River or Lagos. The Binis said it was dug up at the 'back of Benin,' but everything, in the days I am speaking of, 14-15 years ago, which was at all mysterious came from the back of Benin."

Nyendael describes the coral beads as made of "pale red coctile earth or stone and very well glazed," and says they are very like "speckled red marble." While no doubt the material of which the so-called coral beads are made varies, all the beads which have come into my hands are either red coral or agate beads, the former having the characteristic structure and composition of coral, while the latter show the

<sup>1</sup> See Government.



concentric zones of chalcedony, some red and some white. Vast numbers of artificial beads go to the African market, but the above specimens are all natural. At the famous agate works at Oberstein in Rhenish Bavaria, large numbers of trivial ornamental articles are specially made for the African trade. In Burton's time the red coral was brought from the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup>

So far, that is about all we can gather of personal ornaments from the travellers. As regards the ornaments which have come into my hands, I here reprint the following remarks which I published in the Bulletin of the Philadelphia Museum:

The chief feature of the personal ornaments is their variety, yet the specimens illustrated are by no means specially chosen, but are only such as have come under my immediate notice. Another feature is the play upon the patterns; thus in Fig. 15, we have the same pattern as in No. 17, but adapted in a different way, and at the same time reduced so that we get quite a different bracelet. Similarly with the bracelets in Figs. 16 and 18; here the large loop which forms almost one-third of Fig. 16, is reduced, multiplied and set on vertically, instead of horizontally, with the result that quite a different ornament is produced. Spirals, as a basis for design, are not uncommon; in Fig. 19 we have a spiral or coil in its simplest form; in Fig. 20 we have a double coil which itself is formed of an alternate spiral of copper and brass; in Fig. 21 the twist of the angular spiral is quite a novelty, while in Fig. 22 the spirals are set on the ring at intervals. Some of the bracelets are furnished with studs set with agate or coral, which appears to be fixed in position by some sort of mastic or gum; Fig. 24 is very similar to Fig. 23, but has barrel-like enlargements between the studs; the body of Fig. 25 differs from those of Figs. 23 and 24 in being flat inside and out, and in being wider, while the other two have the body flat inside and convex outside; in Fig. 26, which appears to consist of two parallel rings soldered together, the place of the stud is taken by four heads surrounded by beads, and four guilloche patterns (very faint) placed alternately. Fig. 27 represents plaited work, a very common form of ornamentation in Benin and West Africa generally. The hoop represented in Fig. 28 may not be a bracelet at all, but may form part of a chain, as there is in this collection another ring of the same pattern, but oval in shape; the ornamentation, a sort of debased fish scale, is the same on both sides.

The snake heads in Fig. 20 may not be anything beyond a desire to finish the ends artistically; but in Figs. 29 and 30, two of the symbols of the natives' belief form the motif of the design, in the former as the double catfish, in the

<sup>1</sup>At Warri "the actual crown of the sovereign is a sort of large cap in the shape of a cone three feet high, covered with coral beads and with a couple of birds' heads on top" (King). "Some of the Jekri chiefs display a very fair show of wealth, which usually takes the form of silks, coral, gold and silver ornaments, all specially ordered for them by the white traders. I have seen Nana (late chief of Brohoemi) with seven or eight hundred pounds worth of coral on him" (Gallwey, p. 127). Lander writing at Bussa says, "The demand for coral has been very great in every town of consequence which we have visited. All ranks of people appear passionately fond of wearing it, and it is preferred to every other ornament whatever" (II, p. 4). It was also worn by the king's women in Dahomey (Norris, p. 112). King Obi of Ibo on the Lower Niger wore "On his neck three strings of pipe coral, as large as a man's small finger; two of which were short, and close to the neck, while the third extended to the navel. . . . each of his ankles was ornamented with eight strings of coral, a dull old brass button closing each string, and two leopard's teeth attached to the strings of coral on each foot" (Crowther, Lond. 1842, p. 283).



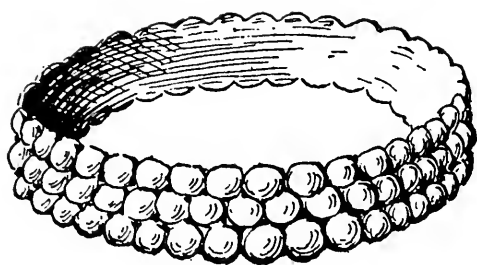


FIG. 15.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.

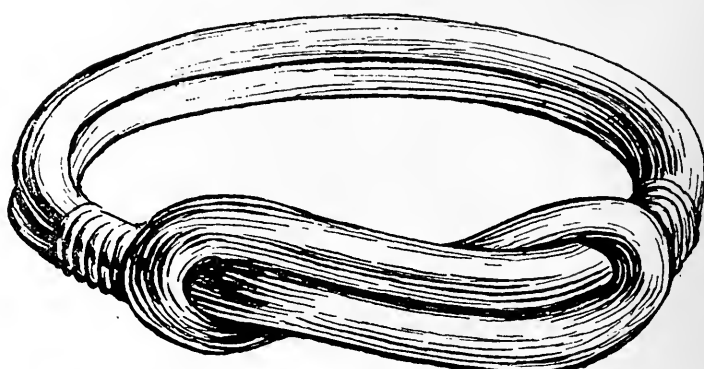


FIG. 16.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.



FIG. 17.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .

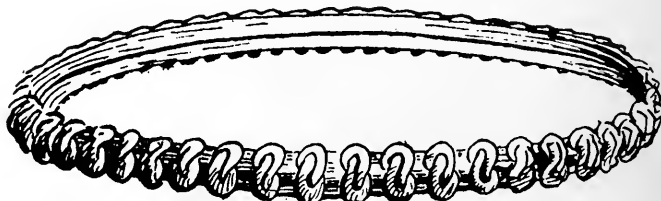


FIG. 18.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.



FIG. 19.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Major Copeland-Crawford's Collection.

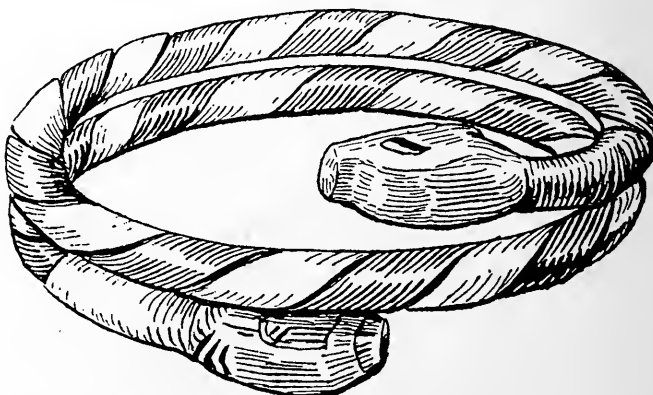


FIG. 20.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.

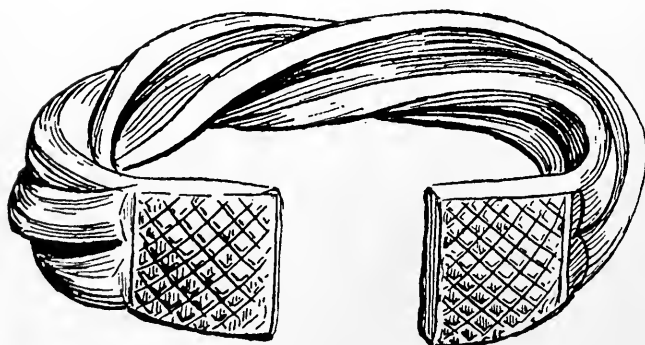


FIG. 21.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's  
Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

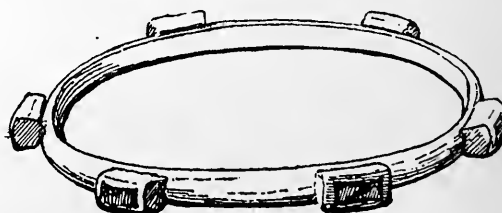


FIG. 23.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Major Copeland-Crawford's Collection.



FIG. 24.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Major Copeland-Crawford's Collection.

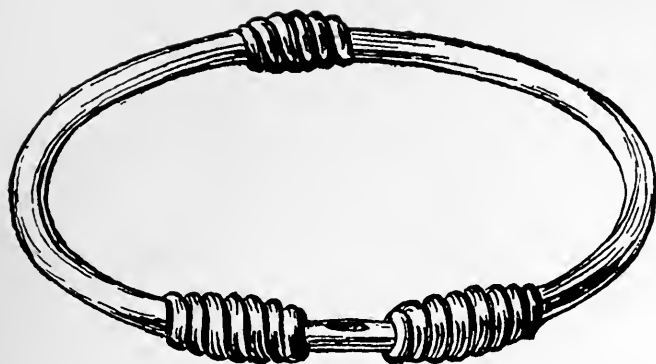


FIG. 22.— $\frac{1}{2}$

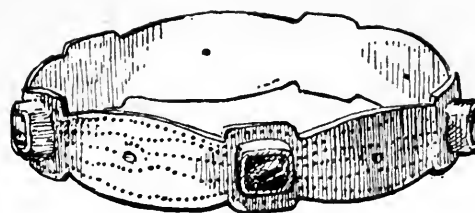


FIG. 25 — $\frac{1}{4}$ .  
In Major Copeland-Crawford's Collection.

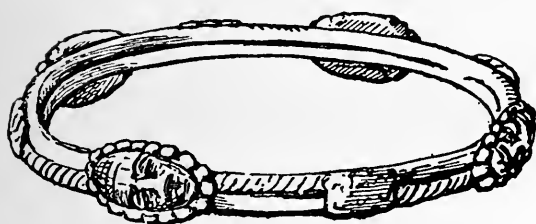


FIG. 26.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Major Copeland-Crawford's Collection.

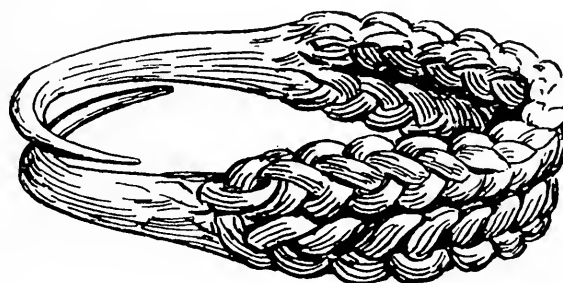


FIG. 27.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's  
Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.



FIG. 28.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.



FIG. 29.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.



FIG. 30.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's  
Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

latter as catfish (usually snakes) issuing from the nostrils of a human face. This bracelet (Fig. 30) is of copper, and overlaid (excepting the two faces and catfishes) with a brass plate about one millimeter thick, and is massive and rough; the catfishes are fixed on by means of holes drilled in the nostrils and into the sides of the forehead. Extremely curious is the bracelet Fig. 31, apparently made of short pieces of copper tubing soldered into the form of a chain and furnished with slits; as the bracelet passed through the conflagration which destroyed the city it is not now possible to ascertain what had been inserted into these receptacles. A very curious finger ring is illustrated in Fig. 32. It is inset with agate along the central horizontal position and with carved coral along the crosspieces; the upright cylindrical pieces, like

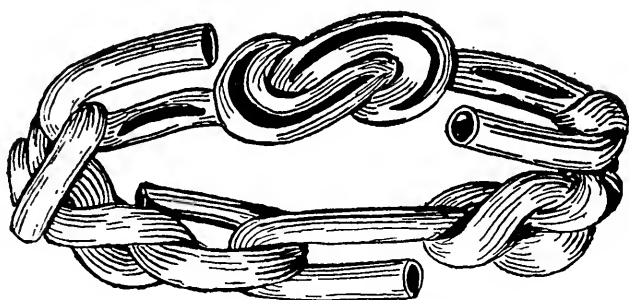


FIG. 31.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

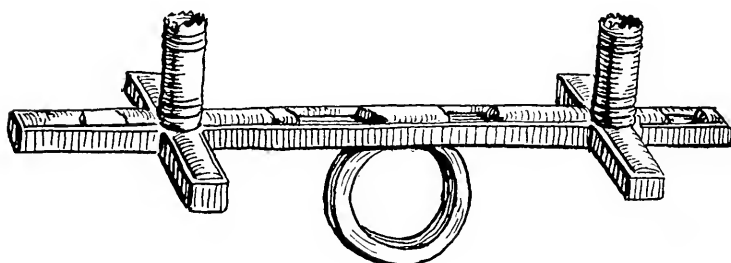


FIG. 32.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Science and Art Museum, Philadelphia.



FIG. 33.



FIG. 34.



FIG. 35.

In Science and Art Museum,  
Philadelphia.

the pin Fig. 34, are hollow at the top for the reception of some inset, and originally it may have been glass, as in the top of pin Fig. 33. Dr. Forbes (Bulletin of Liverpool Museum, I, 50) in describing the spots of a bronze leopard, says they are filled in with a yellow, porcellaneous glass or enamel, applied in a fused condition, but I venture to differ from my friend, the Doctor, as to me the inserted matter looks more like dry putty. However the question cannot be settled until a chemical or physical examination is made. The pin (Fig 35) is inset with coral. What the porpoise-like article shown in Fig. 36 is meant to be is not clear; it may be a pendant to wear suspended from the neck and perhaps was intended for a whistle.

A few gold-plated ornaments have been found in Benin, but, so far as I am aware, only two gold ornaments; this is strange, for surely plating is a more difficult process than casting or working; it is very certain the plating has been done elsewhere. Fig. 37 does not call for special remark beyond referring to the neatly-finished points. In Fig. 38 is represented a pendant, perhaps of fetish value; the lizards are concave underneath, as shown by the section; the hawk's bell is attached to the lizards by means of a curious ring, shaped out of a thin piece of metal and rolled up into the shape of a tube, the ring being closed by the insertion of one end into the other. Figs. 39 and 40 appear to be pendants. The gold ornaments brought home

by Dr. Allman were a "bracelet formed by a double-headed snake grasping between its jaws a decapitated human head, and a snake about nine inches long." In Mr. C. Punch's time, gold was simply not appreciated, or only counted as brass; king or nobles, in making a selection, would voluntarily prefer a silver to a gold ornament.

While the workmanship of the articles illustrated is, generally speaking, good, it is not, as a rule, equal to that of the large Bini metal work; this is no doubt due to the greater difficulty presented by the smaller surfaces on which the artisans have had to work.

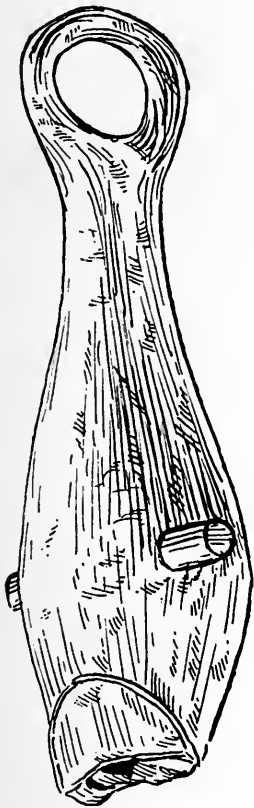


FIG. 36.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Science and Art Museum  
Philadelphia

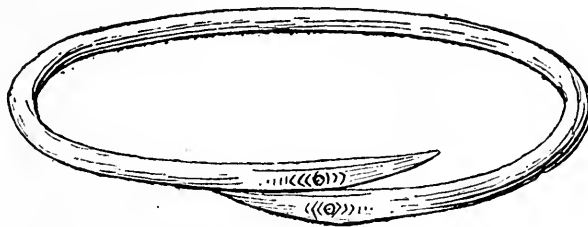


FIG. 37.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Dr. Allman's Collection.



FIG. 38.— $\frac{1}{2}$ . In Dr. Allman's Collection.



FIG. 39.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Dr. Allman's  
Collection.



FIG. 40.— $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
In Dr. Allman's  
Collection.

We now come to a curious class of objects—namely, the long armlets and leglets which are so fashionable in West Africa. They are made of carved ivory (Figs. 41, 42) of brass (Figs. 43, 44, and 45), and of copper with some of the masks in brass (Fig. 44). It is said these articles are put on when the individual is quite young and not taken off until death, if then; in the event of removal, the foot or hand has frequently to be chopped off first. The ivory bracelets are old and much worn down, that illustrated in Fig. 41 especially so. In Fig. 42 a European is probably intended to be shown; the three heads shown alternately with the tortoises in Fig. 41 are also meant to be those of Europeans, but, looked at from the



FIG. 41.—Ivory. 130 mm. high.  
In Mr. R. K. Granville's Collection.



FIG. 42.—Ivory.

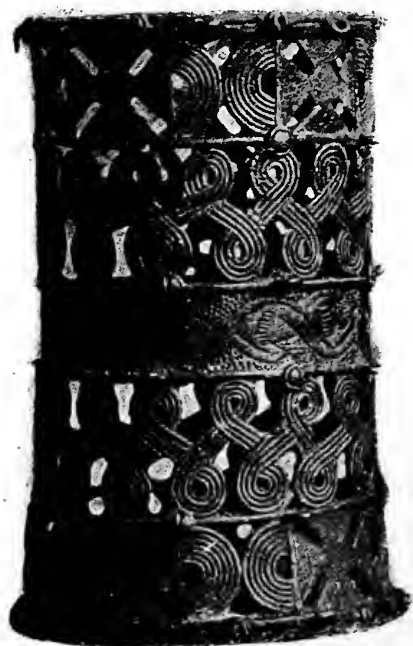


FIG. 43.—Brass. 145 mm. high.  
In Mr. R. K. Granville's Collection.



FIG. 44.—Copper Armlets, with Brass Masks.

left side, they look like bullock heads, the side hair developing into horns. Fig. 43 is an elegantly finished production and a good example of Bini art, and is provided with loops for the hawk bells, which turn up everywhere in unexpected places throughout Bini metal work. The bracelet (Fig. 42) is interesting as exhibiting a conventionalized leopard's face on the top as well as a European's face at the bottom, likewise developing into a form of ornament. In bracelet (Fig. 46) some of the disks are blank, evidently awaiting the enchanter's tool; it also shows a hawk bell *in situ*. The fertility in design is in all these forms manifest indeed, it is a feature in the art of the Benin natives which any of our jewellers might do well to copy.



FIG. 45.—Brass, roughly cast. 90 mm. diam.; 136 mm. high; 2 mm. thick. In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.



FIG. 46.—Unfinished Brass. The three discs evidently waiting for the enchanter. 89 mm. diam.; 136 mm. high; 1 mm. thick. In the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's Collection, now in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

According to D. R., "They also cut their body from the armpits to about the groin, or in the middle, with three large cuts on both sides, each cut being one finger broad, and consider this a great virtue conducive to their salvation." These marks are made when the children are quite young, for as Nyendaël tells us "they make small incisions all over the bodies of the infants, in a sort of regular manner expressing some figures thereby; but the females are more adorned with these ornaments than the males, and each at pleasure of their parents. You may easily guess that this mangling of the bodies of these tender creatures must be very painful; but since it is the fashion here, and is thought very ornamental, it is practiced by everybody."



Of this process, Mr. C. Punch tells me "it was simply brutal. All girls had to undergo it. The child was laid down and held by the mother, and the expert proceeded to scrape the skin at the places required, with a sharp glass, very lightly, as one erases a blot of ink on a book. I was not told that anything was rubbed in to raise the skin, as the Jekris did, but the child's sufferings were acute." Burton in comparing the Ijos with the Bini, remarks: "The Ijos are nearly all free-men, and therefore they greatly resemble one another. The tribe-mark in both sexes is a line extending from the scalp down the forehead to the tip of the nose, made with a razor or a sharp knife, and blackened with charcoal or gunpowder. It is opened and reopened till a long, thin frenum, or bridle as it were, draws up the skin at the bridge of the nose, and gives a peculiar expression to the countenance. The people of Benin have a similar mark, but it is not raised, and it often ceases at the eyebrows. Men and women have on each cheek three, short, parallel cuts, sometimes straight, sometimes crescent-shaped. Another favourite decoration are three broad stripes of scar, like the effects of burning, down the front of the body from the chest to the lower stomach. Lastly, the skin is adorned with 'beauty berries,' buttons of raised flesh that much resemble exanthemata." (pp. 146 & 7). Of the Bini women he says... "The general mark was a tattoo of three parallel cuts about half an inch long, and placed close together upon both cheeks about half way between the eye and the corner of the mouth. Some added to these 'beauty-spots' on the middle of the forehead, vertical lines of similar marks above the eyebrows, and three stripes, or rather broad shallow scars, from above the breast to the stomach." (pp. 410-11). At Gwato "The tattoo is a broad line of scars extending down the breast and stomach." (*ibid*, p. 280).<sup>1</sup>

The marks of the cicatrisation are clearly shown on nearly all the faces in bronze or wood, made by the Bini.



Figs. 47 and 48.—Front and back view of brass showing tribal marks on forehead; pupils of eyes are iron inset; height  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. (19 cm.) Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

<sup>1</sup> At Warri, in Dapper's time, "All natives, men and women, are marked with three cuts, each cut a *duim* [less than an inch] wide, one on the forehead, above the nose, and one on each side of the eyes on the temples."



## CHAPTER III

### CHILDBIRTH AND MARRIAGE

No ceremony at birth—Feast to scare away evil spirits—Circumcision of both sexes—Destruction of twins—Twins a good omen—Mother and twins destroyed at Arebo—Specified cases—Destruction introduced at Gwato (36)—Children exposed in pots—Twins welcome amongst Fantis—Destruction of twins at Bonny, Onitsha, Cross River, Abo and elsewhere—Marriage—Polygamy of the king and noblemen (37)—Inheritance of a father's wives—Eunuchs—White men's difficulties—Widows' position—Girls married at twelve years—Distribution of women by the king—Forced courtesans—Freedom on giving birth to a son—Great and little courtesans—Continence until child walks—Method of marriage—Bridegroom demands girl in marriage (38)—Handsome presents given—Feasting—Marriage before arrival at puberty—Jealousy of native men—Men kept from women's apartments—Women offered to Europeans—Greater freedom of poor men's wives—Wives retire on arrival of visitor—Punishment for adultery (39)—Husband claims paramour's effects—Women driven from home—Women with powerful relations pardoned—Death penalty inflicted in case of governor's wives—Ordeal for adultery—Punishment for rape—Periodical sickness—Number of king's wives (40)—Eunuchs—Fathers dispose of female children only—Gifts of wives—Royal prerogative—Effect of 'pardon' wine—Obscene talk—Fruitful women honoured.

ACCORDING to Landolphe there was no sort of ceremony at birth (II., p. 50). According to Nyendaël, "When the child is seven days old, the parents make a small feast, imagining that the infant is past its greatest danger; and in order to prevent the evil spirits from doing it any mischief they strew all the ways with dressed victuals to appease them. Eight or fourteen days, or sometimes longer, after the birth of their children, both males and females are circumcised; the former are thereby bereft of their prepuce and the latter of a small portion of their clitoris. If they are asked who first taught them circumcision, and to believe women to be periodically unclean, they reply, that they do not themselves know, but that these customs are traditionally handed to them by their ancestors. And this is the common answer of all the blacks." D.R. also states that girls as well as boys are circumcised.

"No twins are ever found in the country, but as may be supposed, they are born as well as elsewhere, for it is suspected that either of them is every time choked by the midwife, the giving birth to twins being considered as a great dishonour in the country, for they firmly believe that one man cannot be the father of two children at the same time" (Dapper).

This is a very different state of affairs from that related by Nyendaël: "If a woman bear two children at a birth, it is believed to be a good omen, and the king is immediately informed thereof, and he causes public joy to be expressed with all sorts of music. The father imagining it too heavy a task for the woman to suckle both the children, searches out a wetnurse whose child is dead; whom he persuades by the power of money or good words to nurse one of his children. In all parts of the Benin territories, twin-births are esteemed good omens, except at Arebo, where they are of the contrary opinion, and treat the twin-bearing woman very barbarously; for they actually kill both mother and infants, and sacrifice them to a certain devil,

which they fondly imagine harbours in a wood near the village. But if the man happens to be more than ordinarily tender, he generally buys off his wife, by sacrificing a female slave in her place; but the children are without possibility of redemption obliged to be made the satisfactory offerings which this savage law requires. In the year 1699, a merchant's wife commonly called *ellaroe* or *mof*, lay-in of two children, and her husband redeemed her with a slave, but sacrificed his children. After which I had frequent opportunities of seeing and talking with the disconsolate mother, who never could see an infant without a very melancholy reflection on the fate of her own, which always extorted briny tears from her. The following year the like event happened to a priest's wife. She was delivered of two children, which, with a slave, instead of his wife, he was obliged to kill and sacrifice with his own hands, by reason of his sacerdotal function; and exactly one year after, as though it had been a punishment inflicted from heaven, the same woman was the second time delivered of two children, but how the priest managed himself on this occasion, I have not been informed, but am apt to think that this poor woman was forced to atone for her fertility by death. These dismal events have in process of time made such impressions on the men that, when the time of their wives' delivery approaches, they send them to another country; which makes me believe that for the future they will correct these inhumanities."

About 120 years later Lieut. King tells of "the barbarous custom of exposing twins which formerly existed at Arebo, lat.  $5^{\circ}58'$ , long.  $5^{\circ}10'$ , has now introduced itself at Gatto; the children are placed in an earthen pot face upwards and allowed to perish on the top of a hill" (p. 313).<sup>1</sup>

„At Ondo which borders on Benin territory the twins were exposed under pots in the Oro fetish groves. The mothers from superstitious motives are as anxious to carry out the rites as the priests. We have much trouble in suppressing this evil custom" (C. Punch).

<sup>1</sup> "Attah is the Fantee name for twin, and all twins born in Fantee, bear that name, the mothers of whom are held in much estimation for being thus prolific. In Bonny the reverse takes place, for there the mothers of twins are compared to goats, and they, as well as their offspring, are not unfrequently destroyed" (Adams, p. 37). At Bonny in Crow's time mother and twins were put to death (p. 238). A former resident of Onitsha on the Lower Niger, informs me "Twins are objected to and both are killed in the Ibo country. The killing is brought about by placing the children in a large earthen pot which is then carried into a part of the bush which is tabued and called *tonton*. The children are soon killed by the ants and other flesh devouring insects. Passing Europeans hearing the wailing of the children have carried them off, but in most cases the exposure had already been too much and they succumbed. A child so rescued and surviving would, if a girl, experience difficulty in getting married for fear she have twins. Bishop Hill in traversing a piece of bush which the natives had made over to him for missionary purposes, found a *tonton* with over 200 pots which had contained babies. The natives would not assist to clear the spot." Bennett (Niger Notes iii., p. 67) hearing of a child being left exposed to die, went in the evening by the light of the half moon to find it; he writes: "At first we thought the baby was dead as we heard no sound, but, after groping in the dark and touching it with my hand, it cried, so we knew it was alive. We broke the pot by which it was covered." The description of the method of destruction is unfortunately not clear, for if the pot covered the child how could it be touched with the hand before uncovering? In the Brass district the younger twin is killed and the woman counted unclean. Miss Kingsley gives a graphic and painful account of a case of twins with which Miss Slessor at Okijou had once to do (Travels, pp. 473-6), for had not Miss Slessor interfered, the mother would have been an outcast, and the children both killed. Allen and Thomson mention the destruction of twins and the disgrace of the mother at Abo, on the Niger (Narr. Niger River, Lond., 1848, I, pp. 243-4). Schön (p. 49) also mentions the destruction of twins at Ibo.

We are told by D.R. that "the King has many wives," and that when twice a year he makes a progress through the city "He is accompanied by all his wives, which may be above six hundred in number, who, however, are not all his wedded wives but his concubines. It is the custom of the country that a man should have many wives, for the noblemen have often some eighty or ninety or even more,<sup>1</sup> and there is no man so poor but that he has ten or twelve wives at the least, from which one may conclude that in this place one finds more women than bachelors and men." From Dapper we learn, "The King has a great number of wives, actually more than a thousand; for at his father Kambadge's death, he inherited all his father's maiden wives; for his concubines are not allowed to marry again, being shut up in a convent, and guarded by the eunuchs; if one of these women came to forget herself, she would be immediately killed with her paramour. Every man marries as many wives as he likes and is able to feed, besides keeping a great number of concubines. They are exceedingly uxorious, but a white man or a Christian can hardly get a public woman there in the country for fear of punishment, as such a thing is prohibited under a penalty of death. The woman, who has had a son by her deceased husband becomes servant to her son, and is not given in marriage to another man but must serve him as a slave, not being allowed to marry a man without her son's leave. If it happens that a man wishes to marry such a widow, he asks her son for her hand, promising him another young girl in her stead for him to marry, which young girl must remain his slave as long as he likes. The son is not allowed to do away with the woman or the old mother, should he wish to do so, without the King's leave. A daughter is not given in marriage by the father there till she is twelve or fourteen years old, after which time the father has no more to do with her. All the women who have lived with their husbands are allotted to the King after their husbands' or owners' death; but of the other women, some go to the son, and some are accepted as wives by others. It also happens sometimes that the King does not give these women in marriage again, but makes courtesans of them, and they have to offer a yearly tribute of a certain number of cowries. Having no fear of the rule of a husband they choose as many suitors as they like, and without any restraint give way to their passions, although they sometimes do the same when married. These courtesans, when giving birth to a son in unmarried state, are freed of the tribute by the fact, but if it is a daughter, then the King gives her (the daughter) in marriage to some one. There are also great courtesans to whom the inferior ones have to give account every year, just as the great ones have to do this to the great Fiadores or State-councillors, who only show their income to the King.<sup>2</sup> A man keeps away from his wife when she has risen from child-bed, until the child is a year or a year and a half old, and can walk, but she knows how to make up for it in the meantime; if the husband happens to perceive it, he makes a complaint of it to the Fiadores."

Mr. C. Punch tells me that "in Benin city public women were not common, a state of affairs very different to what existed in the surrounding countries. In Benin no woman would ever dare to offer herself, nor would she cohabit with a European without the king's license. The legitimate daughters of a king did not *marry* anyone but bestowed their favours as they pleased."

<sup>1</sup> A man's wealth is estimated by the number of his wives (Landolphe II, p. 58).

<sup>2</sup> At Dahomy there were public women who paid a heavy tax, brewed beer and raised poultry, (Norris, p. 99). In towns like Benin and Abomey where the kings claimed all the women such an institution would be unavoidable.

From Nyendaël we learn, "The men here marry as many women as their circumstances will allow them to keep; they have scarce any, or at most very few marriage-ceremonies amongst their poor or rich, except only that the rich treat the bride's friends more splendidly than the poor do. Their marriages are commonly made in the following manner. If a man like a maiden he mentions his wish to one of the most considerable amongst his relations, who repairs to her house and asks her of her relations, who, if she be not before promised, seldom deny his request. The consent then of the relations or parents being obtained the match goes on, and the bridegroom covers his future bride with a rich suit of clothes, necklaces and bracelets, and after having handsomely treated the relations on both sides, the wedding is ended without any further ceremony. The acknowledgment mentioned is not made at the house of the bridegroom, or indeed any other; but the victuals and drink are dressed and prepared, and everyone has his portion sent home." Similarly Landolphe tells us "there is no marriage ceremony. A young man desirous of getting married demands the girl from her parents, who rarely refuse; he gives them one or several pieces of cloth and takes his wife home. If she be too young and show no sign of puberty, the husband confides her to the supervision of the women, who notify him when the marriage should be consummated, which is at the age of eleven or twelve years" (II, p. 50).

"The negroes are very jealous of their wives with their own countrymen, but not in the least with respect to us; for they are very little concerned at our conversing with their wives, whether we chaff, sit, or lie by them, provided we keep within the bounds of modesty; nay, they have entertained so good an opinion of us, that when we visit them, if their affairs call them away, they not only leave us alone with them, but recommend us to their wives for diversion whilst they are out" (Nyendaël). Elsewhere, the same traveller observes, "the women behave themselves very obligingly to all; but more especially the Europeans, except the Portuguese, whom they do not like very well,<sup>1</sup> but our nation is very much in their favour. But no male negro is allowed to come near the women's apartment, which is a custom very strictly observed by them." Burton (p. 155) found the people of Warri and Benin "touchy about and jealous of their wives even with foreigners, and amongst themselves fighting always follows a suspicion of dishonour. On the other hand they are no less free with the other members of the family, sisters and daughters, and they appear to take offence if these ornaments of the house are not duly admired." They were freely offered to Burton's party but declined.

"All the difference between the wives of the great and those of the meaner sort," says Nyendaël, "is that the latter go everywhere where their work obliges them, but the former are almost always shut up very closely, to obviate all occasions for transgression. If a man be in his own house, accompanied by some of his wives, and receives a visit from any of his acquaintance, the wives immediately retire to another part of the house, that they may not be seen; but if the visitors are Europeans, they continue with their husbands, being requested to do so by the latter, whom they use all their arts to please, because their happiness depends on them, for the men are here absolute masters of their wives."

<sup>1</sup> That the European nationalities do not love one another is also shown by some of the carvings, where they are depicted fighting against each other. When the French were repulsed from Anamabu by the English in 1749, they said the natives would have preferred the French (Labarthe p. 68). Landolphe not obtaining a concession he wanted, puts his non-success down to previous treatment meted out to the Bini by the Dutch (II, p. 95).

"Adultery is here punished in three several ways: First, amongst the commonality in the following manner. If any man is suspicious of the levity of any one of his wives, he tries all possible means to surprise her in the fact, without which evidence he cannot punish her; but if he succeed in his endeavours he is thereby lawfully entitled to all the effects of her paramour, whether consisting in slaves, cowries (their money), elephants' tusks, or any other mercantile commodity; all which he may immediately seize, make full use of, occupy and enjoy as his own. The offending wife is very soundly cudgelled and driven out of his house to seek her fortune; but no person being very fond of marrying her after this, she retires to another place, where she passes for a widow by way of obtaining another husband; or else strives to gain a livelihood by a trade not very difficult, for her at least, to learn. Thus far extends the poor man's satisfaction. The rich revenge themselves much in the same way; but the woman's relations, to avoid the scandal which might thereby accrue to their family, reconcile the offended husband with a round sum of money, and thereby prevail upon him to take her into favour again, which he generally does. The woman then passes for as virtuous as before, and takes her turn with the other wives. The Governors punish adultery more severely; for if they surprise any man with one of their wives, they kill both the wife and paramour on the very spot where the crime is committed, and throw their dead bodies into the dunghill to be exposed as a prey to wild beasts. These severe punishments amongst all ranks of people deter men from meddling with other people's wives so much, that adultery is very seldom committed here" (Nyendaël). Landolphe states that "a woman accused of adultery is brought before the judges, who make her kneel down in a public locality, where two chalk circles are drawn in which she places her big toes. Two full pots in front of her contain what is known as good and bad fetish; if on being ordered to acknowledge her crime she pleads guilty, she is given the bad fetish to drink and is poisoned. If she pleads not guilty her tongue is rubbed with a herb, the juice of which makes it swell suddenly and protrude out of her mouth. A cock's feather is then passed through it. If the accused persists in denying the charges and there are not sufficient witnesses to convict her, the feather is withdrawn from the tongue, which is rubbed over with some fresh herb of which the sudden effect is to reduce it painlessly to its natural state. The woman then drinks the good fetish and goes her way" (II, pp. 65-66). This looks much like a case of ordeal which has not been properly understood by Landolphe's editor.

"The man who commits a rape is at once considered married to the girl; if the assault has been committed at night the two are proclaimed as married as soon as daylight appears—they are united by this simple formality. If the girl be too young to bear child the man is fined, as his action is considered criminal" (Landolphe II, p. 50). "Sick women are not permitted so much as to enter their husband's houses, or to touch anything, either to dress the food or clean the house, or indeed to enter on any other account; nor are they permitted so much as to look into, much less enter any houses, but during this period are obliged to reside in a separate house<sup>1</sup>; though as soon as that is over and they have washed themselves, they are restored to their former state" (Nyendaël). "It is also criminal to cohabit during a wife's periodical sickness, or when the woman is *enceinte*, or with milk. In the first case the woman retires to some distance where special houses are provided for her, and does not return until after purification by bathing, and the man who has cohabited in such case is likewise bound to purify himself to avoid penalty" (Landolphe, II, p. 50).

\* This is also the case with the Jekries (Granville and Roth, Jour. Anth. Inst. xxviii., p. 110).

In Lieut. King's time the King of Benin was "said to possess 4000 wives, but he gives some away to those who have done him some service." This number is a big increase on D.R.'s 600 wives, Dapper's 1000, and Landolphe's 3000 (I, p. 335). The latter says every wife is waited on by three negresses, while a Captain of Eunuchs looks after them; their houses are in a row like factories. "On one occasion when the wives were told to dance the king cried for joy, while "the severe looks of the eunuchs contrasted strangely with the emotion of the sovereign" (*ibid*). Burton mentions that "a eunuch of the palace called upon us. He was a little beardless old man, clad in a tremendous petticoat; and he assumed considerable dignity, speaking of the head Fiador as of a very common person. The abominable institution is rare in Africa, and when found is borrowed from Asia. At Benin the habit of secluding the king's women has probably introduced these guardians of the harem" (Burton p. 412).<sup>1</sup>

"When a male infant is born it is presented to the king, as properly and of right belonging to him, and hence all the males of the land are called the king's slaves; but the females belong to the father, and live at home as long as he likes, till they are of age, after which he marries them when and to whom he pleases" (Nyendaël).

"People in high positions like the 'big men,' the fiadors and the passadors receive as gifts girls ranging from four to eight years of age. These children remain in special apartments under the supervision of the old women. The monarch sends his girls to the 'big men,' the latter send theirs to the fiadors, who treat the passadors in the same way. As soon as the girls arrive at a marriageable age they are dressed in the finest raiment and presented to their husbands" (Landolphe, II, pp. 50-52). "At Benin there is a law that only the King must supply matrimony. He generally provides the stranger with one of his daughters, whom he reckons by 'tallies,' and he charges a right royal price" (Burton, p. 409). This statement bears out those of the earlier writers. When Gallwey states "A man may take unto himself as many wives as he likes" (p. 129) he probably means that there was no limit to the number of wives a man might have, but subject to the King's approval.<sup>2</sup>

"The negroes are very libidinous, which they ascribe to their 'pardon'-wine, and good eating, which invigorates nature: they are indeed much in the right as to the latter, but I never could observe any such virtue in the former. They are not obscene in a broad way in their talk, but anyone who can turn a deft expression in the matter is considered a wit. That the population increases is not very hard to believe, since the women are not barren, and the men are vigorous; the latter have the advantage of a choice out of their great number of wives, of whom for their encouragement, the fruitful woman is highly valued, whilst the barren woman is despised" (Nyendaël).

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Crow (Memoirs, Lond., 1830, p. 249) mentions that at a Grand Juju to which a Bonny man had appealed against King Pepple the judges were eunuchs.

<sup>2</sup> At Warri in Dapper's time, "Everybody may take as many wives here as he likes or can take, and sometimes the King distributes some widows." "The King of Warri, although not so rich in lands as the King of Benin, is not the less so in wives, having also 4000. Some of these women reside in the centre of the building, the others in the town; as at Benin they form a portion of the royal treasury which the King disposes of to his faithful subjects" (Lieut. King). The King of Dahomey gives wives to the people; parents have no sort of property in their children in Dahoman territories; they belong entirely to the King (Norris, p. 88).



## CHAPTER IV

### BURIAL

Slaves sacrificed to serve master in next world—Festivities—Exhumation of corpses—Women's funerals—A female chief's human sacrifices—Preparation of body when death occurs at a distance—Shaving a sign of mourning (42)—Fiadors buried in sitting posture—Tomb turned into altar—Carved elephant tusks—Wooden rams' and bullocks' heads—Libation orifices—Coral necklace returned to king—Body of well-to-do man carried round village—Poor man's body thrown away—Vultures—Stranger's body thrown into forest—Corpses tied up in mats (43) King's burial in hole in ground—Desire of wives and slaves to be immolated alive—Stone rolled over tomb—Slow death of the victims—Fire lit on tomb—Festivities—Numerous murders—Vultures—Articles placed in tomb—Similar account given by Landolphe—Kings' and victims' bodies exhumed—Sacrifices to ensure king having servants in next world—A king's tomb—Carved pilasters (44)—Ivory snake.

THE dead were disposed of by means of burial unless when sacrificed. "They bury their dead with all their clothes on, and kill a certain number of slaves as a sacrifice, especially for persons of rank, in order that the latter may have their services in the other world, and spend seven days with dancing and playing with drums and other toys on the grave. They sometimes exhume the corpses, so that they may honour them with a fresh sacrifice of men and animals, bewailing them as before, with great lamentations. When a woman has died, her friends come and take away pots, pans, boxes and cupboards, and then go about in the streets with all the things on their heads, with sound of drums and other instruments, singing in honour of the deceased. If it is a woman of rank, a certain number of slaves is also killed near the grave, and put beside the corpse. It happened once that a woman, when *in extremis*, ordered the slaughter of seventy-eight slaves on her grave after her death; and finally, in order to make the number even, she ordered one more boy and one more girl to be added to the sacrifice. No person of rank or wealth dies there unaccompanied by bloodshed" (Dapper).<sup>1</sup> Nyendaël tells us "When any person dies, the corpse is washed and cleansed, and if a native of Benin happens to die at a very distant place,<sup>2</sup> the body is thoroughly dried over a

<sup>1</sup> In Dahomey the slaughter of wives on the death of a king was very great; the wretched women were put into the tomb living, with broken legs, and cautioned to treat their lord well (Labarthe p. 125). Of Bonny burial, Adams writes (p. 139), "Human sacrifices are common. Where a chief dies, many of his wives are destroyed and interred with him." "The Ejomen [Jos, Ijos] being all free, their funerals are long, mainly limited, in fact, by the wealth of the departed. The wake consists of drinking rum, drumming, dancing, and playing—in the sense of Sardanapalus the son of Anacyndaraxis his inscription—for seven nights and three days; after that it is kept up every third or fourth day until the month expires. Six guns are fired at dawn and sunset; also at mid-day, if the obsequies be those of a very great man. There are, however, no human sacrifices or customs, properly so called, in this tribe; these barbarities are unknown except on occasions of settling important palavers" (Burton, p. 157).

<sup>2</sup> Lander mentions the case of deceased Badagry chiefs whose bodies were all brought to Benin. See Chap. I., p. 13.



gentle fire and put into a coffin, the planks of which are closely joined with glue [*sic*], and brought at the first opportunity to the city for burial. But sometimes a convenient conveyance does not offer itself for several years; wherefore the corpse is thus kept above ground for a long time, as I have seen several in my time at Arebo. The nearest relations, wives and slaves, go into mourning for the dead person, some shave their hair, others their beards, or half their heads, &c. The public mourning commonly lasts fourteen days. Their lamentations and cries are accommodated to the tunes of several musical instruments, although with long intermediate stops, during which they drink plentifully. And when the funeral is over, each person retires to his own house, and the nearest relations, who continue in mourning, bewail the dead in this manner for several months."

According to Landolphe, "at the death of a great man, of a *fiador* or a *passador*, he is buried in the apartment he preferred most when living. Before lowering the corpse into its tomb it is placed on a wicker bier raised about three feet from the ground. A fire is lighted underneath which melts the fat and dries the body. It is then carried into a sort of alcove in a sitting posture. It is then built round with clay in the shape of an altar three feet high. On the top are placed beautiful elephant tusks each weighing forty to fifty pounds, well carved with images of lizards and snakes. These tusks are set on crudely carved wooden heads of rams or bullocks. I saw at least twenty tusks on one of these tombs. The chamber where the deceased lies is only entered once and that is on the anniversary of his death. All his friends and relations are present. At the foot of the tomb a small hole is made about 6 inches square and 18 inches deep, into which libations of palm wine and brandy are poured; the kola fruit or cachew is also thrown in, after which an infinite number of *oramus* are said, which I never thoroughly understood (II., p. 53)." "The bunches of coral belonging to the dead are returned to the king, as his office not being hereditary, his children are not patented until they are twenty years of age and have done something useful for the state; besides which, the favour must be asked for by a majority of the inhabitants of the canton of the father. The body of a well-to-do man is carried on a litter and is covered with a white cloth. Wailers follow the corpse, which is carried round the village and then buried. As to the poor man his body is almost thrown away. Sometimes it is thrown outside the village into the ditches, where a multitude of vultures devour it. These birds, as big as turkeys, pace the streets and it is forbidden to kill them because they hurt no one and destroy lizards and other reptiles (*ibid* I., p. 54). Of these vultures we are told by D.R.: "Especially do they fear the birds, and have a great abhorrence for them, and no man dares do them any harm in any way, for there are men purposely appointed to give them food, which they carry in a stately manner and with great reverence, which food when so carried no man may see but those appointed to do it, and every man makes way and then runs off when he sees these men come to bring the birds food, and they have a special place so that the birds may always come there for their food or nourishment."<sup>1</sup>

A stranger who dies without being identified is deprived of burial and his body is thrown into the forest (Beauvais, p. 144).

<sup>1</sup> Speaking generally of the coast, Adams writing in 1823, p. 186, says: "The birds of prey are eagles and vultures; the latter are the scavengers of tropical countries and are so fearless of man, in consequence of the protection they receive from him for their useful qualities, that in some of the African towns they will scarcely move out of the path where he is walking."

"The approach to Benin," writes Mr. C. Punch, "was by an avenue, and in this were many corpses tied up in a mat. Sometimes we were told they were the corpses of those, who, accused of witchcraft had died while undergoing the ordeal of saucewood. Others told us that the bodies of the poor and those without relations to make the funeral services, were so thrown out in the bush.<sup>1</sup> We were also informed that at the big ceremonies all the victims were beheaded and that only the headless trunks were thrown into the *iyó*."

"When a King dies," according to Dapper, "a large hole is dug out in his palace, wide at the bottom and narrow at the top, and so deep that the diggers are even drowned in the water. Into this hole the king's corpse is thrown, when all the king's favourites and servants appear, offering to accompany him in order to serve him in the next life, and although none but those who have been most beloved by him during his life can obtain this favour, there is much quarrelling over the question. After those that are granted the favour have climbed down into the hole where the king's corpse is lying, a large stone is rolled up to the opening of the hole to cover it, while the people stand around it night and day. The next day some people are sent out to open the hole by taking away the stone, then they ask those that are in the hole what they are doing, and whether anybody has gone to serve the king. To which there is no answer but 'No!' On the third day the same question is again asked, and then sometimes the answer is given that such or such a one has first undertaken the journey, and such or such a one in the second place, which first one is praised and deemed happy by all of them. At last, after four or five days, all these people are dead. When there is no one left to give an answer this is reported to the new, presumptive king, who at once orders a large fire to be lit on the top of the hole, on which a great quantity of meat is roasted for distribution among the community; this is to inaugurate his reign. After the hole has been filled up, great numbers of people are cut down,<sup>2</sup> and the heads of the corpses covered with pieces of cloth, that nobody is allowed to lift; only certain birds, of which there are two sorts, one called *Goore* and the other *Akalles*, dare touch them. There are some who say that only headless or beheaded people are thrown into the hole. A great part of the late king's attire, furniture and *boesjes* or cowries, is placed near the corpse."

Landolphe's account is as follows: "When the King of Benin dies a hole is dug in one of the large courts of the palace, about four feet square, thirty deep and very broad at the bottom. The monarch's body is lowered into it together with his ministers—the latter alive. The opening is closed by a large wooden lid, victuals are brought to it every day, and the question asked, 'Is the king dead?' The unfortunate ones reply 'He is very ill.' The bringing of food and the asking of questions is continued until silence certifies that there are no more living. During the first days the capital is in mourning. Men masked and disguised in a fantastic way armed with a *damas* [? Damascus blade] throng the streets and steal the heads of those whom they meet, collecting the blood in copper dishes to pour on to the tomb of the king. A little later on, the bodies of the king and his ministers are withdrawn from the hole, and those of the victims are handed over to their relations, who feel much honoured by the fact that the king's servants should have accompanied

<sup>1</sup> "One of the most keenly felt of Yoruba curses is '*Okubo*—May you die off or be buried in the bush' i.e., 'May you be so poor or insignificant that when you die no one will bury you.' " C.P.

<sup>2</sup> There is a temporary anarchy and tumult at Dahomey, Wydah, &c., when a king dies and before his successor is announced and takes possession of the throne (Norris, p. 129).

him into the next world. They are buried at the bottom of their compounds. The king himself is buried in a spacious court under a vast portico supported by twelve large pillars each formed from a single tree trunk. These badly carved pilastres represent great men in their ceremonial dress when attending the king's council. On examining one of these tombs I noticed many elephants' tusks seven feet long and brilliantly white, but it hurt me much to see them covered with human blood. On the roof there is a snake thirty feet long and six feet in circumference made by artistically mortising these tusks into one another.<sup>1</sup> Its mouth was open and its tongue consisted of a blade of copper. It seemed to be coming from the top and to be gliding the length of the roof in order to get into the tomb. The above details were given me by the fiadors as well as by many inhabitants, for no king died while I was in the country" (I., pp. 55-56).<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the men who go about masked and disguised they remind Mr. C. Punch of the Okerison, who, during 14 days in November went about with short bars killing anyone they met.

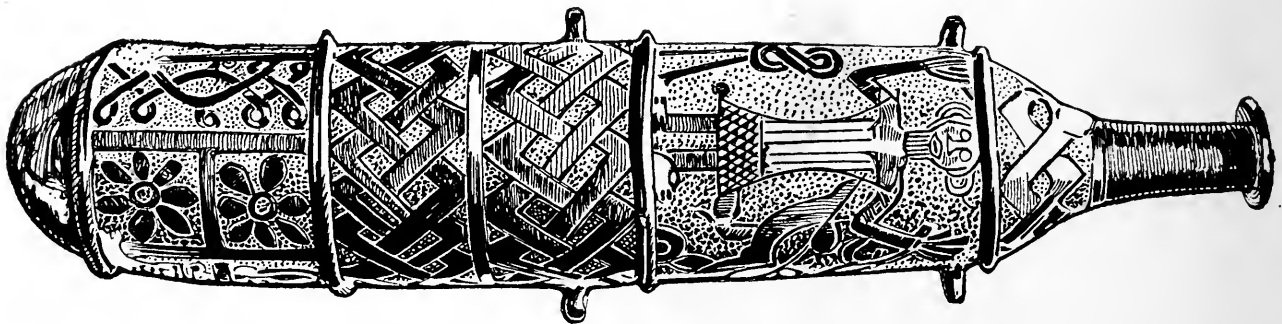


Fig. 50.—Brass bottle, engraved. Height 16in. (40 cm.). British Museum.

<sup>1</sup> This appears to be the only reference to an animal built up of ivory. The snake seen by the Punitive Expedition was of copper. At Windsor Castle there are, I believe, two Benin leopards built of ivory.

<sup>2</sup> "When King Orishima of Brass was buried, a hole was dug as big as a room, about 8 feet wide by 14 feet long by 12 feet deep; at one end was placed a table on which were boiled beef, ship's biscuit, *tumbo* (palm wine), glasses, &c., and this was boarded round. The body of the king was kept in a small house close to his house, where any passer-by could see the body lying in state, until it became quite objectionable to them, when it was carried round the town in a wicker frame on men's shoulders and finally put into the grave or chamber. When the hole was sealed by laying logs across the top and then earth or clay over that, a small hole was left for *tumbo* or gin to be poured in at the yearly 'father making.' Shortly after the death of a chief, king, or well-to-do man, his people fire off cannon at intervals during the day and night, sometimes for several weeks after the body has been consigned to its last resting place. The amount of gunpowder burnt on these occasions is regulated by the riches of the defunct and the liberality of his successor. Free men and the chiefs and petty chiefs are buried with the same formalities as the king. But the scale on which these formalities are carried out is gradually diminished according to the wealth of the party to be buried. The body is buried in the dwelling house of the late chief." For this note I am indebted to Count de Cardi. If I remember right, Hutchinson mentions the case of a king's burial at Calabar when the women had their legs broken before putting in the tomb, and that for a time the ground, which covered them, heaved with their struggles.

## CHAPTER V

### CHARACTER

Courtesy to strangers—Pride—Honesty—Drink—Immorality—Courtesy—Dignity—Vanity—Superstition—Good treatment engenders reciprocal treatment (46)—Adherence to ancient customs—Mutual civility—Fear of government—Pretence of being poor—Charity—Laziness—Feigned civility—Liberality to Europeans—Thievish and superstitious—Good heartedness and hospitality—Poisoning and robbing—Burton's bad opinion (47)—Cannibalism, no record of—Roupell's officials deny its existence—Idle Chiefs—Want of care for the poor.

D.R. found the "people very straightforward and doing no wrong to one another, nor do they cheat one another," and he adds elsewhere "the people are very reverential and respect strangers very much, for when any stranger meets or passes them on the path, they make way for him and step aside, and no one of them is so bold as to go by or overtake him, unless they be expressly bidden so to do, or the stranger prays them to go on, nay, they dare not do so, however much they have to carry or however heavily laden they may be, for if they did they would be punished for it. Neither are they wanting in pride or ambition and they desire always to be praised by their own people." Dapper gives them practically the same character: "The inhabitants are all decent people, surpassing all the other negroes of the Coast in everything, living peacefully together under good laws and justice, and show great respect to the Dutch and other foreigners visiting their Coast for commerce, and also to each other. They are not much given to stealing, nor are they drunkards, but they are very libidinous."<sup>1</sup> The last named characteristic is borne by them to the present day in spite of severe punishments and restrictions. "The Jekris complained that it was the common habit of Bini men to send their wives to the water side (riverside) markets with intent to decoy the Jekri traders into *lisions*, so that pains and penalties might be bestowed on them. In my time the Binis seemed to be courteous and hospitable to strangers. The chiefs were dignified and reserved in manner, and even when angry did not as a rule indulge in loud tones or violent gestures. They were very curious when we first visited them. They came in a continual stream from morning till midnight in order to see the white man. All ranks and classes came into the room in which we sat, saluted us gravely, sat down and stared, and then saluting us again got up and left. They did not beg for small presents as most natives do, and if given any trifles expressed their thanks. The leading traits of their character were undoubtedly vanity and superstition, and it would be difficult to say which prevailed" (C. Punch). Nyendaël goes into more detail and explains the cause of the people's general civility. "The inhabitants of Great Benin are generally good-natured, and very civil, from whom it is easy to obtain whatever we desire by soft means. If we make them liberal presents, they will endeavour to recompense us doubly; and if we want anything, and ask it of them, they very seldom deny us, though

<sup>1</sup> At Warri, Dapper records that the "Natives are cleverer in many things than those of Benin."

they may want it for themselves. But they are so far in the right, to expect that their courtesy should be repaid with civility, and not with arrogance or rudeness; for to think of forcing anything from them is to dispute with the moon. They are very prompt in business, and will not suffer any of their ancient customs to be abolished; in which, if we comply with them, they are very easy to deal with, and will not be wanting in anything on their part requisite to a good understanding. The natives here seem very civil to each other, and omit no opportunity of offering their mutual services; but this is bare compliment, for they will not trust one another, but are jealously prudent, and very reserved, especially in the management of their trade, which they despatch with the utmost secrecy, out of fear of being represented as great traders to their governors, who, upon such a discovery, would certainly accuse them of some crime or other, in order to possess themselves, though never so unjustly, of the effects of these rich merchants. And here, as well as everywhere else, it is easy to find a stick to beat a dog with; wherefore those who are out of power, and have no share in the government, always pretend to be poorer than they really are, in order to escape the rapacious hands of their superiors." Mr. C. Punch found similar conditions prevailing during his visits: "The lower classes were also lazy, and produced little beyond their actual needs and to supply the demands of their overlords. The extortion of the chiefs prevented any progress; no man dared accumulate wealth, own exceptional comforts or make any display of unusual riches." To return to Nyendael: "This obliges them all to a cunning sort of reciprocal civility, in order to avoid accusers; and their professions are very rarely sincere, but only feigned. The king, the great lords and every governor, who is but indifferently rich, support several poor people at their place of residence out of charity, employing those who are fit for any work, in order to help them to a maintenance; and the rest they keep 'for God's sake,' and to obtain this character of being charitable; so that there are no beggars. And this necessary care succeeds so well, that we do not see many remarkably poor amongst them. They are very liberal in all exchange of presents of all sorts of goods, and they give the Europeans large quantities of refreshing provisions, and more than they really want; nay, some in this particular give beyond their ability, only in order to acquire a good reputation amongst strangers."

Landolphe found the negroes very reserved, and says "they would rather have their tongues cut out than divulge anything which might have been deliberated upon in their assembly" (II., p. 65).

Beauvais found the Bini "very thievish and very superstitious." He says the "native has no scruple during the night to attempt to recover an article which he has sold in the day time" (p. 142), and continues, "The Bini is at bottom good hearted and hospitable, but he is also greedy and vindictive. He dares not, on account of his religion [*sic*] strike a white man, but he does not hesitate to poison<sup>1</sup> him in order to rob him, or for the sake of vengeance" (p. 143).

<sup>1</sup> As we have seen above, Dapper states the people of Warri do not poison each other so readily as in Benin. At Warri when a tiger was killed, Landolphe remarks: "The negroes believe that the tiger's liver is a poison as subtle as violent, and the chiefs of villages take every precaution to prevent its being used. They collect all the men, of whom eight are elected by a majority of votes, and who take an oath not to touch the liver. The tiger is cut open, his heart and liver are placed in an earthenware jar, and a heap of stones are piled round it. The eight men get a canoe and take the jar, which they throw into the middle of the river. On their return they take a fresh oath that they have not touched anything which was inside the jar" (I., p. 165). At Abo the gall of the drummer fish is said to be a deadly poison (Cole, *Life in the Niger*, Lond., 1862, p. 186).

Nyendael mentions special precautions being taken to secure the king against poisoning. Arrows were poisoned according to D.R.

In Burton's time the character for honesty had deteriorated still more, for we are told by him: "I determined the Beninese to be, with the sole exception of the Mpongwe or Gaboons, the most pilfering race that I had visited on this west coast of Africa" (p. 417). "Trade was nearly all carried on by women and they were most dishonest. The lower classes were not such arrant thieves as the Jekri and Ijos, but probably that was because the European was more an object of awe to them than to the former. European goods and chattels were under the king's protection, and unless by his orders would not be stolen to any great extent, all the same, I remember once when in Ojomo's house that his household made free with many trifles belonging to me" (C. Punch).

Beauvais says that the old chroniclers spoke of the natives of Warri and Benin as cannibals (Flore p. xi.), but I am quite unable to trace any such statement. Indeed, Roupell's officials say, "We have never heard of our fathers eating human flesh." It may be accepted as a fact that cannibalism was not a Bini failing.<sup>1</sup>

The occupation of the people is cursorily referred to by Nyendael: "There are several very rich men who live here and attend continually at court, not troubling themselves with either trade, or agriculture, or anything else, but leaving all their affairs to their wives and slaves." The employment "of the ordinary citizens is to loiter about whole days, till they hear of any ships being come into the river, upon which they go thither to trade with what goods they have in store. . . The handicrafts' men keep to their work without troubling themselves with the court or trade. Others employ themselves in agriculture, or some such thing, in order to get their living" (*ibid*).

In Mr. Punch's time the character of the people, in the above respect, appears to have been the same as in Nyendael's time: "The chiefs lived in Benin, seldom visiting the villages which belonged to them. They were lazy and lived on the work of their slaves and retainers.

"While professing, and to some extent paying, great deference to age, absolute neglect could be shown to anyone old and without friends. I remember an old woman coming to Gwato without friends or means of subsistence. We found her lying in the village dying of simple starvation. Neither the Ahuraku nor any of the people would do anything for her, and when arrangements were made to give her some food and quarters, the women of the town, going daily for water, would not as much as fill a pot for her. For this reason both the Benin and Jekri people were anxious for large families, so that if poor they might have someone to support them in old age" (C. Punch).

<sup>1</sup> In the Esmeraldo there are, however, frequent references to the Jos [Ijos, Ejaus, Jomen] as eaters of men, and Gallwey (p. 127) writes that "even now, 1892, they do not object to a tender morsel of human flesh when the opportunity offers." The spirit of the Ijos broke out very strongly among the neighbouring people of Brass a few years ago; included in the mob of cannibals was a young chief who had just returned from being educated at a missionary college in England (Boisragon, p. 31). In Crow's time, at Bonny, a Kiva chief who had been taken prisoner was eaten (p. 84.)



## CHAPTER VI

### FETISH AND KINDRED OBSERVANCES

Dapper's version—'Cult to the devil'—No need to worship a benevolent spirit—Orisa—Fetishes—Devil charmers—Predictions—Nyendael's version—Gods and devils—Images—Anything extraordinary is a god—Their knowledge of God—Impossible to make image of god—No organised priesthood (50)—Worship the devil to ward off evil—The same image a god or devil—Ghostly warnings—Offerings essential—"The custom of our forefathers"—Variety of offerings—Flesh of offerings eaten (51)—Explanation given to Landolphe and Beauvais—Feast days (52)—Annual non-human sacrifices—Sabbath every fifth day—Animals slaughtered and flesh eaten by poor—Future life in the sea—The shadow bears witness in the next world—Sacrifices made to the sea (53)—Alagwe the juju canoe spoiler—The discovery of salt—The Luba juju—His prediction of arrival of ships—Not allowed to enter Great Benin—Fetizers esteemed—Ahuraku priests—The 'Parson' (54)—Foundation of Gwato—The Malaku cult—Wood devil spreads plague if offended (55)—His rule violated by Europeans—Native explanation—Annual expulsion of evil spirits—The Egugus—The drivers' curious dress—They maltreat all they meet—Their acrobatic performances—Idol or Fetish huts (57)—Description of one—Antics of the worshippers—Fetish huts in forest used for human sacrifices—Disguise of officials—No women allowed to enter these huts—Burton's descriptions of altars—Shango, god of thunder—Heterogeneous collection of fetish articles (59)—Interior of the altars—Curious contents—Altar at Gwato—Dwarfed figures—Variety of fetish objects—Vows—Libations—The Kola nut—Chopping juju (61)—Chalk a prophylactic (62)—Juju signs—King of Benin fetish—The king a high priest and a god—He required neither food nor sleep—King could turn into bird, &c.—King ruled by fetish priests—Human sacrifices (63)—Protest by Portuguese missionaries—Moffat and Smith's description—A Golgotha—Vultures—Pit for sacrificed bodies—Burton's account—Skulls lying about like pebbles—A field of death—Turkey buzzards (64)—Victims on roads to city—Crucifixion—Sacrifice on arrival of white man—Victim made drunk—Voice of Oro—His victim—Slaves only—King's piety (65)—Sacrifices to his father—Oro—The Okerison—Barracoons—Catching victims—Gallwey's account—Path strewn with the dead—A rule of terror—Crucifixion—Dr. Roth's description (66)—Sacrificial trees—Ground strewn with human bones—Skewered mouths—No strict method of immolation (68)—Still living victims in pits—Curious wounds—How caused—Captives noosed—Captives stapled on to logs—Animals sacrificed—Commander Bacon's record (69)—Woman horribly mutilated—Goat sacrificed to prevent advance of white men—Curious reason for sparing a captive—Dr. Allman's account—Sacrificial trees—Horrible sights—176 victims—Brutal mutilations—Seventeen pits to hold the victims—Seven rescued from the pits—Originally no women sacrificed (70)—Roupell's officials explain the sacrifices—Bad people or slaves sacrificed—Sacrifices to the king's dead father—Method of immolation—The Bead sacrifice (71)—The victim receives a message to take to Bead Juju—Curious prophecy—Sacrifice to Rain God—Woman victim—Sacrifice to the Sun—Sacrifice to God of Health, Ogiwo—Man and woman sacrificed—Message sent to Ogiwo—Dead people go to Ogiwo—White men go to another country (72)—Criminal freemen ordered to commit suicide—Any excuse for a human sacrifice—Ivories and cast work sprinkled with blood—Ground in one compound caked with blood—Main object of sacrifice to send prayers to avert evil—The making of one's father—King's semi-annual parades (74)—Dapper refers to one annual parade—Tame leopards—Dwarfs—Human sacrifices—Their return to life—Royal show of wealth—Nyendael's description of the Bead or Coral Feast (76)—Legroing and Balon's description—Laughter of King at the sacrifices—Beauvais' explanation—Coral a royal gift—Yam Feast—More human sacrifices—Trick played on the people (77)—New yams not eaten until after feast—Special fortnightly fetes—Details of a human sacrifice—Bad music—Lascivious dancing—Blood sprinkled on tomb—



Landolphe's attempt to stop a sacrifice (79)—Beauvais' detailed descriptions—Music—Processions—Fine dresses—A dancing minister—Monotonous chant—The victims—Second chant—Victims touched—Third chant—Immolation (82)—Fourth chant—Fanaticism of the women—Animals sacrificed—Women's offerings—Mr. C. Punch's arrival after sacrifices done (83)—Curious ceremony—A voluntary human sacrifice (84)—His privileges—Woman accused of witchcraft—Torture—Millepede fetish—Water fetish—Jekri water spirit (85).

"As to their religion," says Dapper, "it consists of a cult to the devil, to whom they sacrifice men and cattle; for, although they know full well that there is a God who has created heaven and earth, and still rules, they think it of no use to adore him, as he is not bad, but good; so they try rather to satisfy the devil with sacrifices, because he always treats them badly.<sup>1</sup> They call God *Orisa*,<sup>2</sup> and the white one (*den witte Owiorisa*) i.e., God's child. They have their *Fetishes* or idols, made of wood or green herbs,<sup>3</sup> which they worship and consult; everyone has also his *Fetizero* or devil-charmer, who asks the devil to speak with him; the devil then answers by



Fig. 51.



Fig. 52

Figs. 51 & 52.—Bronze Plaques in British Museum. The turned up fish legs of the central individual in fig. 51, and the fish from the belt of the individual in fig. 52, would seem to indicate fetish, and hence these individuals are probably intended to represent a king of Benin. The support given to the arms of the fish-legged man in fig. 51 show that he was at least certainly a big chief.

means of *Fetizi*, and predicts what will happen to them in war or on other occasions, by a sound that is supposed to come from a pot with three holes." Nyendaël's version is: "They profess to worship both gods and devils in human and brutal images, some of which are elephants' tusks, claws, dead men's heads, and skeletons, etc. Also

<sup>1</sup> It was apparently in Dapper's time, as it is now, the fashion to speak of a non-Christian religion as that of the devil. The native explanation of why the devil is worshipped is, of course, the outcome of European teaching; before the advent of the latter such an explanation would probably never have occurred to a Bini.

<sup>2</sup> At Onitsha, bundles of sticks are fetish.

<sup>3</sup> At the present day, the Jekries of Warri, call God, Oreshé.

they take everything which seems extraordinary in nature for a god, and make offerings to it; and everyone is his own priest, in order to worship his gods in what manner pleases him best.<sup>1</sup> It is really the more to be lamented that the negroes idolise such worthless nothings, as several amongst them have no very unjust idea of the deity; for they ascribe to God the attributes of omni-presence, omniscience, and invisibility; besides which, they believe that he governs all things by his



Fig. 53.—Bronze plaque of a fetish king and his attendants; the king's legs ending in the form of the conventionalised catfish. Height 15½ in. (39cm.) In the possession of Mr. R. K. Granville. What the meaning of the fish legs, or, as they are sometimes represented, snake legs, is not known, but they can be compared with those of the mystic Abraxos (Fig. 54).

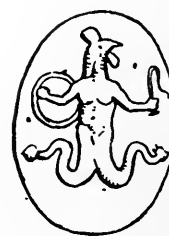


Fig. 54.—For comparison of the fish-like legs with those on Fig. 53. It represents the Gnostic Supreme Deity known as Abraxas (O.M. Dalton Guide to the Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities, British Museum, London, 1903, p. 31.)

providence. By reason of God being invisible, they say it would be absurd to make any corporeal representations of him; for it is impossible to make any image of what we never saw. They have therefore such multitudes of images of their idol-gods, which they take to be deities subordinate to the supreme God, without considering

<sup>1</sup> "I never could find any traces of an organised Juju priesthood in Benin, although there are natives who attach themselves to certain fetishes. In Yoruba, on the other hand, the Ifa priests are a distinct initiated body, but they pursue commonplace vocations as well. Whatever sacrificial killing was considered necessary, was performed by the king's officers. The saucewood, as I have shown in the case of an ordeal, was sent down by the king's boys (the Ukoba), and generally speaking, the priestly offices, like that of the executioner, seemed to be performed by men appointed from the king's staff. Again, certain nobles had certain rites and duties to carry out. The chiefs of the towns would perform some of the rites, and the heads of families others, and then some people inherited the right to perform some fetishes and business. Nor do I think that even the Oro brotherhood has any parallel to our ideas of a priesthood." (C. Punch).

what sort of trifles they are, believing there are mediators betwixt God and men, which they take to be their idols. They know enough of the devil to call all that is evil by that name, and believe themselves obliged to worship and serve him, to prevent his doing them a mischief. The devil is not represented by any particular image, or distinguished from their idols otherwise than in their intention only; for to the very same image, they at one time make offerings to God, and at another to the devil; so that one image serves them in the two capacities of God and devil. They talk very much concerning the apparition of the ghosts of their deceased ancestors or relations; which yet happens only to them in their sleep, when they come and warn them to make this or that offering; which, as soon as the day approaches, they immediately do. If they are unable, they will, rather than fail in this duty, borrow of others; for they imagine that the neglect thereof would draw on them some heavy affliction. If any person in raillery tells them they are only idle imaginations and

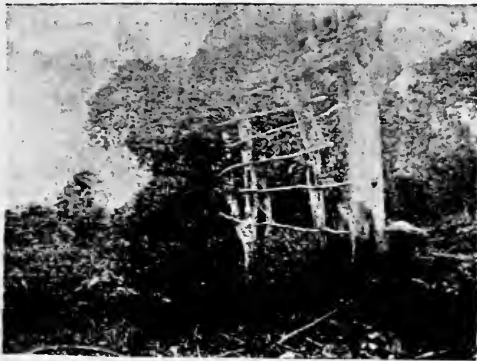


Fig. 55.



Fig. 56.

Figs. 55 and 56, Crucifixion Trees from snap shot photographs by Dr. Allman.

dreams, they will agree with them, but add, 'it is a custom of our forefathers which we are obliged to follow.' No other answer is to be obtained from them. Their daily offerings are not of great value, consisting only of a few boiled yams, mixed with oil, which they lay before the images of their gods. Sometimes they offer a cock, but then the idol only gets the blood, because they like the flesh very well themselves." With regard to the above distinction between one powerful good spirit and a multitude of evil spirits, Landolphe's and Beauvais' statements are not uninteresting. According to the former their explanation for not adoring God was somewhat as follows. They say "Our sovereign is really great; we see him seldom and hardly ever speak to him. If it happens that we are brought into his presence, we prostrate ourselves without daring to look at him, being obliged even to cover up our mouths with one hand. God is infinitely greater and also infinitely good, as he never does us any harm; there is, therefore, no need to worship him and besides, he thinks much less about us than does our king. But the same does not hold good with the devil, for as he is wicked, causes us as much evil as he can, and as all troubles come from him, we pray to him and worship him, and we give him victuals to appease him" (II., pp. 70, 71). While according to Beauvais: "The native believes in two beings; one a good one to whom he never prays because he has nothing but good to expect from him, and one an evildoer whom he invokes so as to avoid the evil which he may do him. The native cuts off his fellow creatures and sprinkles his fetishes with their blood in the hope of inducing his divinity to treat him well (p. 142)."

"They keep many feast days, celebrating them with dancing, jumping, playing, and the butchering of cattle and men, to the honour of their idols or Fetizi, and also with eating and drinking and merrymaking" (Dapper).

"The great men make annual sacrifices, which are performed in great state, and prove very expensive; not only because of their killing multitudes of cows, sheep, and all sorts of cattle, but because, besides that, they give a solemn [*sic*] feast, making their friends very merry for several days successively and besides making them presents" (Nyendaël). The same traveller says: "Their sabbath happens every fifth<sup>1</sup> day, which is very solemnly observed by the great, with the slaughter of cows, sheep and goats, whilst the commonalty kill dogs, cats, and chickens, or whatever their



Fig. 57.—"A human sacrifice, to make the rain cease, made in May, 1891. The victim was garotted—note the stick up the back; tie tie (*Calamus* sp.) was tied round the neck and stick and twisted tight. The wretched place was always occupied by dead bodies." From a photograph by Mr. C. Punch.

money will reach. And of whatever is killed, large portions are distributed<sup>2</sup> to the necessitous, in order to enable them, as every person is obliged, to celebrate this festival" (*ibid*). Nyendaël also records that "the seat of bliss or torment, in the future life, they imagine to be the sea. They call the shadow of a man *passador* or conductor, who they believe shall testify whether a person has lived well or badly; if well, he is raised to great dignity, but if badly, he is to perish of hunger and poverty; so that they send the happy and the damned to the same place." This belief in a future state in the sea has doubtless arisen since the advent of Europeans, for as we shall

<sup>1</sup> "The fifth day was kept a Sunday and no work was done on the farms on that day, but oddly enough the fetish did not prevent other work being carried out. When a man built a new house he asked his friends and neighbours to help him; he did not pay them but provided a feast and drummers. The Sunday was often chosen"—C.P.

<sup>2</sup> See note to Fig. 80.

see later on dead people, not sacrificed, went to the God of Health (p. 72). However this may be, according to Dapper, "They also offer great yearly sacrifices to the sea, to dispose it favourably towards them, and their most solemn oaths are those made upon the sea and upon their king," though what they sacrificed, Dapper does not say, but Adams tells us in his time they were human sacrifices.

Roupell's officials relate that "when Osogboa was king, there was a juju named Alagwe that troubled the country. Then the king called his men and took war against that juju and he drove him and all his people from the village down to the waterside, and when he came to the waterside, Alagwe, the juju jumped in and he has never come back, so there he still is, and he it is who can sometimes spoil canoes. When the king had taken the people, he put his hand to the ground and found it was sweet like salt by tasting it, then he cried out 'What is this that Juju has.' So he and his boys began to dig and take it away to Aso. Before this, we had no salt, so now see how strong and plenty we are.'"<sup>1</sup>

Such troublesome spirits seem not to have been uncommon, for Dapper relates that "in the village of Lubo, situated in the front of the river of Arbon or Benin, lives a certain great Fetizero or devil charmer, the chief of the village, from whom the village has got its name, while all his ancestors have cultivated the same arts; for they could, as the natives said, conjure the sea in several manners, make the waters stir, and know beforehand the coming of some ships from foreign countries; in reward for which the King of Benin gave them the whole village with all the people and the slaves; so he still possesses this village of Lubo by inheritance, showing strange tricks, and always behaving like one possessed; therefore nobody dares shake hands with him. The Benin ambassadors when coming there are afraid of him, and he himself is not allowed to go to Great Benin or its environs, by virtue of a certain law, adopted a very long time ago by the Benin kings, who nevertheless hold many of those Fetizeros in great esteem and honour." This Lubo is probably Ologbo, and if so confirms Mr. Punch's remarks that the Europeans came first to Ologbo and not to Gwato (Egatun). "There would probably be a tradition of an Ahuraku priest at one of the waterside villages on the Ologbo creek. There was an Ahuraku priest at Igoro, a small town on the road between Gwatun and Benin, and there was another in Benin city. Neither the Ahuraku at Gwato nor the one at Igoro might set foot on the road to Benin beyond the bounds of his town. I was told that the Ahuraku at Igoro if very angry about anything would say 'Well, I will go to Benin then,' and make a great show of starting. Whereupon his friends and family restrained him. But the news, that he had come out of his town as far as the bounds and had only been restrained by his family, would be carried to Benin and perhaps the king would send to ask what had so vexed his soul as to make him contemplate such a desperate deed. The same would hold good with the Ahuraku at Gwato, but the position of the one in Benin itself I never understood" (C. Punch).

"Gwatun was the head centre of the cult of Malaku, the spirit of big water, *i.e.*, the sea, big rivers, not creeks. Hence it is easy to understand why it should be the town set aside for the entrance to Benin of the white man who came on the big water. I used to be told in a vague way the tale of the foundation of Guatun. A son of a king named Caladesan was its founder. Either his mother was false, or else he was accused of attempting one of his father's wives. Anyhow, he fled from Benin,

<sup>1</sup> This would probably be some Jekri village where the salt bush is; there is no salt bush in the Ado country. See Trade.



and after much wandering and some magic with a palm-tree and a turtle, took up his home at Guatun, where the turtle is sacred to this day, as it is also at Ilaro, to the west of Lagos Colony, and in many other places. Caladesan's town thrived, and he defeated an army sent by the King of Benin. His independent sovereignty was allowed, but he was never to return to Benin. At Igora, the chief called Ahuraku, was also independent. The king's boys (Ukoba) were not supposed to enter into either of these towns to make trouble. In Cheetham's time, the Ahuraku, who was known as 'Parson,' was a strong man and insisted on his rights and the Ukoba were quiet. But the Ahuraku I knew was a feeble creature, and the king's

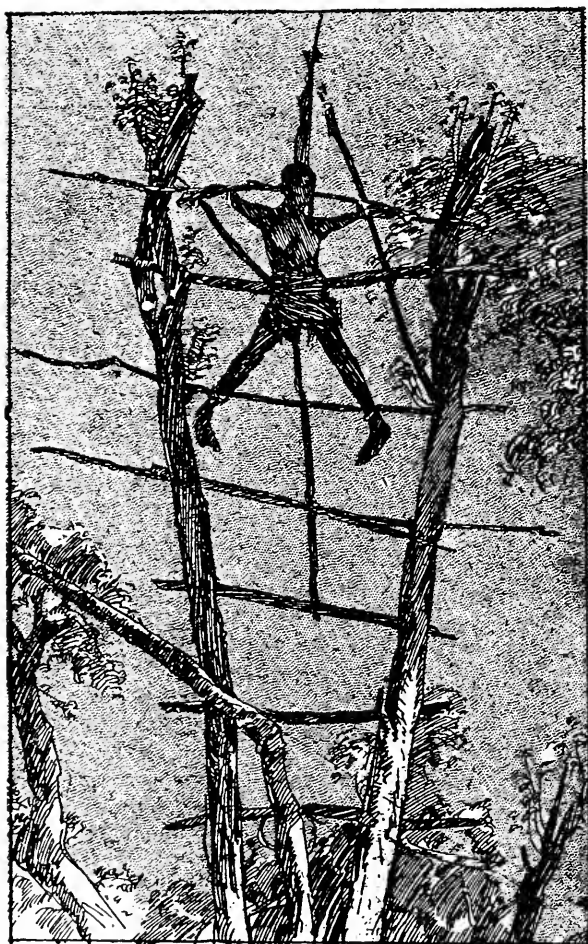


Fig. 58.—A woman crucified as an offering to the God of Rain. From a photograph taken by a member of the Punitive Expedition. (*The Daily Graphic*).



Fig. 59. "The above represents a wooden human figure placed close to the entrance of one of the principal compounds. What appear to be sticks, are human entrails, and the mass on the ground is composed of portions of human remains; on the pedestal are remains of sacrificed fowls, dogs and goats, scattered about." From a snapshot photograph by Dr. Allman.

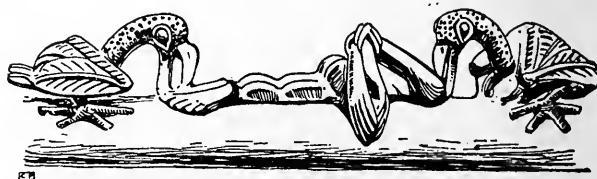


Fig. 60. Scavenger Birds attacking decapitated body with arms tied at the back. Bronze Work, British Museum.

boys did as they pleased till I arrived. I am afraid the Ukoba did not like me much, especially two named Aguramasse and Agbe.

"The story of the origin of Guatun was also connected with Asije or Esige, the king specially connected with the Europeans, as well as with the founding of the iron and brass industries in Benin. There was a compound dedicated to him in Benin, in which was a deep well of pure water and a very old breech loading gun. He arrived at Guatun and went from there to Benin to 'Chop King.' He did not go by the

straight road, but round through a place called Uruegi. There are many villages on the road, each of which seemed to have some old legend. I remember a tree bent across the path which was an object of veneration. Asije is said to have hung his bag containing his treasures, including the implements for iron working, on the tree, and the weight bent the tree down. When Asije passed on, the tree remained bent. Asije seems to have left a reputation for benevolence and gentleness quite foreign to the Benin type. There was a big flood over all Benin in his day, and he was said to have driven back the Malaku to Guatun and forbidden him again to invade the land. He fixed iron pins in the ground on the bluff at Guatun, beyond which the Malaku must not encroach. The pins were pointed out to me there when I went up first. Malaku was an impersonation of Orishi, and probably of late origin and peculiar to the Bini, as it is not known among the Egbas and Awyaws of the interior" (C. Punch). When Dapper speaks of the Bini making sacrifices to the sea he was evidently alluding to the Malaku cult. The juju Alagwe was probably no other than Malaku.

Nyendaël, in speaking of the destruction of twins refers to a certain wood (in which the devil is supposed to lurk) "which is by them esteemed so sacred that they never permit a foreign negro or any of his wives to enter it.<sup>1</sup> If any person accidentally happen on a path which leads to this wood, he is obliged to go on to the end of it, and must not return until he has been to the end; and they are firmly persuaded that if this law be violated, or that of offering the children twins and mother, or at least a female slave in her place, the land will be attacked by some severe plague. Notwithstanding all which, I have frequently gone a-shooting in this wood; and to ridicule their credulity, designedly turned before I had gone half-way to the end of the path; by which means I not a little staggered the faith of some, who saw that my boldness was not attended with any evil consequences. But the roguish priests were immediately ready to hand with an exception, which was, that I, being a white man, their god, or rather devil, did not trouble his head about me, but if a negro should presume to do so, the danger would soon appear."

The annual driving out of evil spirits, a ceremony found also more to the east as described by Hutchinson in Calabar, is thus related by Fawckner: "I witnessed a strange ceremony peculiar to these people, called the time of the grand devils. Eight men were dressed in a most curious manner, having a dress made of bamboo about their bodies, and a cap on the head, of various colours and ornamented with red feathers taken from the parrot's tail; round the legs were twisted strings of shells, which made a clattering noise as they walked, and the face and hands of each individual were covered with a net. These strange beings go about the town by day and by night for the term of one month, uttering the most discordant and frightful noises; no one durst venture out at night for fear of being killed or seriously maltreated by these fellows, who are then especially engaged in driving the evil spirits from the town. They go round to all the chiefs' houses, and in addition to the noise they make, perform some extraordinary feats in tumbling and gymnastics, for which they receive a few cowries." (p. 102).

"These people were *egugus*, the same as in Yoruba. They had roughly carved headpieces representing animals, and the rest of the head, body, hands and legs were covered in a loose fitting garment. In old days if in dancing one of the *egugus*

<sup>1</sup> These are the Oro Groves common to all towns in Yoruba land.



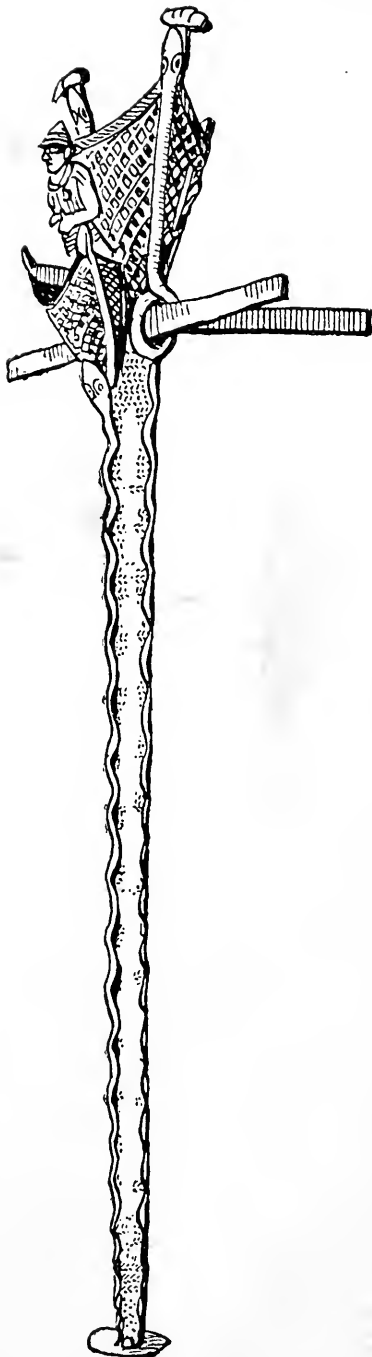


Fig. 61.



Fig. 65.

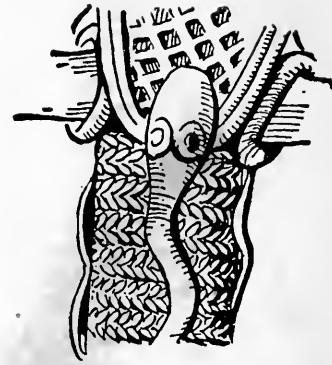


Fig. 62.



Fig. 63.



Fig. 64.

Fig. 61.—Brass Club (Length 552 mm.) From one of the pits there was taken amongst others, a native carrier, a Kru boy, who had been captured at the massacre of Vice-Consul Phillips' party. When Dr. F. N. Roth, examined him, he found three peculiarly shaped holes in the boy's head—one through each cheek, and one deep into the back of the head. The wounds appeared to have been made by a thin, blunt instrument, somewhat like an engineer's chisel, but never having seen an instrument which would exactly fit such mutilations, the surgeon was much puzzled as to what could have been this murderous weapon. The boy could offer no explanation, except that he and many others had been killed (!) so that the British should not enter the city—that he had been hit with a piece of iron, and then thrown for dead into the pit, where he had been five days. He was more or less silly on account of his sufferings, and hence no further explanation could be got from him (See Fig. 66). Shortly afterwards, in examining one of the altars in the king's compound, a British officer found the peculiar instrument here depicted, thickly encrusted with blood, and on showing it to my brother, he considered that this must have been the club with which this lad had been struck; it showed signs of very great wear. It was stated that the two cup-like arrangements were to collect the victim's blood to sprinkle over the bronze heads, carved tusks, etc. Figs. 62, 63 and 64, are details of Fig. 61.

Fig. 65.—Bronze Horn of quite recent manufacture. Compare this with the sacrificial club described by Mr. Punch (p. 74). Length  $14\frac{1}{2}$  in. (37 cm.) British Museum.

showed the bare skin of his hands, feet, body or face he was killed. They were after a fashion ventriloquists.

"In November, which was the time of the feast of new yams, and also the *okerison* time, for fourteen days no man walked on the road going to Gwato. He might walk to Gwato from Benin, but he must not walk the other way. If he walk towards Benin he would meet with an old man walking towards Gwato with a bag over his shoulder. If he saluted the old man he received a polite reply, but, after passing, if he turned, he would see no one on the road, and then he would know he was doomed, and would in fact sicken and die within a few hours. I was assured by many natives that this was a fact which they well knew from personal experience of friends lost. Along the roads are many little fetish altars, and passers by deposit offerings of food, cowries, palm oil, fowl feathers, and above all egg-shaped objects made of white substance, probably kaolin or pipe clay. Once a year all the forest altars are swept and garnished. The old man with the bag is supposed to be a spirit sent by Malaku, who collects in his bag all the offerings on the Gwato road, and on arrival at Gwato disappears with his bag into the big water." (C. Punch).

"Their false gods, or the trash which represents them, are spread all over their houses, and no place is free from them; besides which, there are several small huts erected without the house, which are likewise filled with them, and whither they sometimes go to sacrifice" (Nyendaël). An idol house, or fetish hut, as such are now called, is described by Fawcckner, the building being of the usual habitation type. He says: "The walls of this building are of clay and are covered in with rafters, across which branches of bamboo are laid and tied down. There are no windows, but an aperture in the middle of the roof serves to let in the light, under which stands a cistern or tank, which conveys the rain away through holes into the ground. Round it is a walk about 3 feet wide, where the people dance to the sound of their drums; and he who can make the most grotesque figure and play the most laughable pranks, is held in highest esteem by the spectators. In the centre is a bench formed of brown clay, which, by frequent rubbing with a piece of cocoanut shell and wet cloths, has received a polish, and when dry looks like marble. Here is placed the fetish; there is a young tree beside it stripped of all its foliage, and at the foot an earthen pot containing skeletons of animals, crooked sticks, and such unseemly trifles, which the people ignorantly and superstitiously venerate and worship" (p. 32).

According to Landolphe "there are no temples at Owhere such as exist in Benin. These buildings are erected in the forests and are extremely clean inside and outside. Round about for a long distance are laid the mats on which the executioners march in their processions. When sacrificing, for it is human beings they slay, these men appear disguised in a single piece of native grey cloth, which covers them from the ground to two or three feet above their head, in the form of a sugar loaf, and they also take care to rub their feet with chalk so that they may not be recognised. Two pieces of glass set in holes enable them to see. Women never enter these temples" (II., p. 70).<sup>1</sup>

Burton describes a fetish altar in Benin as follows: "There is not a single room in the house, even the courts and lowest offices, in which altars and implements of

<sup>1</sup> "These dresses are common all over the country. The dress is in reality a long bag, much longer than the person wearing it, so that by pulling it about and refolding it while being worn, it has rather a weird appearance. The spare portion with the open end is folded and held in the hands inside the other parts; the sugar-loaf over the head is made by simply holding up a hand." C.P.

worship do not appear. The religion I at once recognised to be the intricate and mysterious mythology of Yoruba.<sup>1</sup> It has, however, some modifications; for



Fig. 66.—Bronze Stand. The upper figure appears to have in his hand an instrument similar to that shown in fig. 65. The lower figure holds in his hands the jaju rattle, fig. 76.



Fig. 67.—The Kru boy with the curious holes in his head saved from one of the pits. From a snap-shot photograph by Dr. Allman.



FIG 68,—Plaque of a chief or noble holding the Ebere (figs. 69 and 70) in his right hand. British Museum.

instance, Shango, the god of thunder and lightning, is, like Shiva in olden India, here worshipped. The domestic altar is rigged up in various ways, too various in fact for

<sup>1</sup>“This system can hardly be entered upon here; it would require a larger Lemprière [1765-1824, author of *Bibliotheca Classica*]. The reader will find a fair sketch of it in the Rev. Mr. Bowen's *Central Africa*,” F.B.

short description. Some are external, provided with all the heterogeneous mixture of fetish idols; waterpots, pipkins of spirits, cowries, chalk-sticks,<sup>1</sup> ivories, some elaborately and beautifully carved as the Chinese, men's heads coarsely imitated in wood and metal, cocoa-nuts, and huge red clay pipes of Benin make, with stems six feet long. Internally, these *sacella* are usually alcoves, not intended for man's use. Their contents are similar to the former, but more elaborate; there are wooden birds, life-sized, but curiously and wonderfully made, with tails probably intended to resemble elephant tusks, and large black sticks surmounted by a carved hand and out-pointing index; whilst a little below, a wooden clapper converts the open-worked hollow into a rude and noiseless bell." (pp. 278-9). Some sixty years later the members of the Punitive Expedition found the altars covered with similar offertories.

From Gwato, Burton gives a description of a different sort of altar in a fetish hut attached to his host's habitation. "Once a fine building, the roof is now fallen in. Its most remarkable feature is a high altar, conspicuous for the statues of the reigning king and queen. His majesty of Benin is a peculiar figure, somewhat like Ganesa, all head, bust and paunch; his legs are doubled up as if he were a Tecumseh, and his arms are supported 'country fash,' by two similar figures intended, as in the Laocoon, for boys. His consort is in like position; she and her handmaidens have immense bosoms, if volume be beauty. The other objects are plates of thin iron perforated, and shaped like a large fish-slicer, with a shank and a terminating ring—mysterious article, used for making play at festivals. Besides these were many walking canes, wooden pots like old leather jacks [waxed leather pitchers], but adorned with metal, pipes apparently copied from the chibouque, three weather-worn ivories, sundry bells, square and round, wooden and metal, and similar *offrandes*. There were newly made gifts, white chalk and freshly gathered kola nuts" (p. 281). We shall not be far wrong in saying that Burton has here described the altar of the Malaku House illustrated in Fig. 83.

In D.R.'s time they had "also a special sort of fruit which tastes like the garlic, its colour is purple red, but otherwise of the same shape as found on the Gold Coast. When they make a vow and wish to take an oath, they condemn themselves not to eat a garlic which falls or breaks into so many pieces, also many undertake not to eat it at all, each one according as he has a mind." This is no doubt intended to refer to the kola nut.

Similarly to other West Africans, the Bini "when drinking, always pour a few drops upon the ground, muttering the while 'Mobia, Malaku, Mobia—I beg, O Malaku—Fetish—guardian of lands and waters—I beg of thee to defend me against all evil, to defeat and destroy all my foes.' This said, a broken bittock of kola (*Sterculia acuminata*) is thrown upon the ground, and is watered with a few drops of palm wine" (Burton p. 281).<sup>2</sup> "Mobia is however Jekri for 'I beg you.' Some of the drink was carefully poured on the great toe. That on the ground was to the shades of ones ancestors, and that on the toe or head to ones own good luck or destiny. In Benin the entertainer used to make a long prayer involving all kinds of good fortune, and the guest replied by snapping the first and second fingers of the

<sup>1</sup> Burton probably means kaolin, as chalk is not found anywhere near Benin, but could of course have been imported by the trader.

<sup>2</sup> "This purely self-defensive rite, common throughout Western Africa, is often confounded with offerings of wine and food made to the ghosts of fathers—Pitri, the Hindus call them. The latter, however, are always placed in the bush."—F.B.

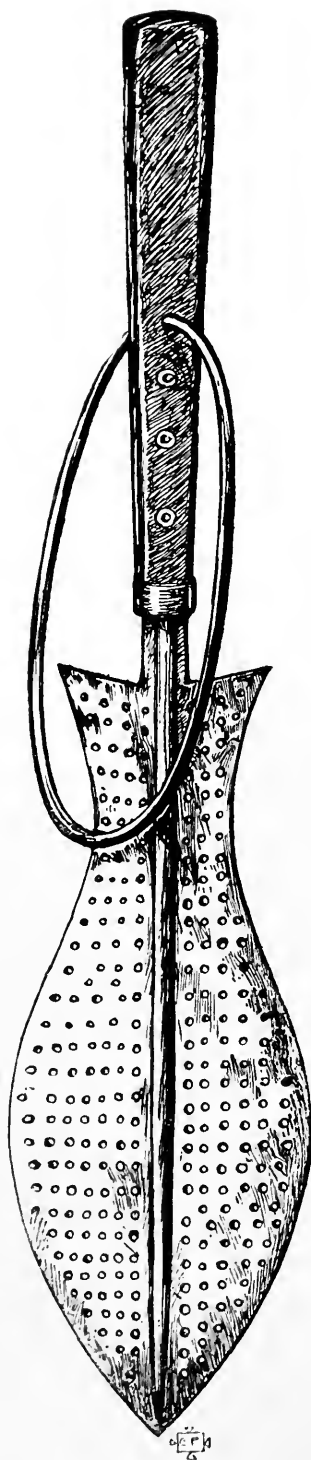


FIG. 69.

Eberes. "These articles were nearly always thought by Europeans to be a kind of cutlass. They were not weapons, but simply ornaments held in the hand, and turned about during the ceremonial dances. I had one made in silver plate for the king, by Mappin and Webb, from an old one lent me as pattern" (C. Punch). Fig. 69 is regularly perforated, but in fig. 70 the holes are placed at irregular intervals and are not so distinctly visible. The blade of fig. 69 appears to be iron, nickel plated and it is furnished with an iron ring 12 in. : (30½ c.m.) diameter; the blade in fig. 70 is brass. The length of the blade fig. 69 is 31 inches (79 c.m.), the length of the instrument fig. 69 is 36 inches (91 c.m.) and that of fig. 70, 38½ in. : (97½ c.m.) In Warri it was stated that these instruments were used by the women at certain dances. Dr. F. N. Roth, who was present at the taking of Chief Nana's town in 1894, tells me a large quantity of these articles were then found; they were mostly silver plated and bore the name of a well known Birmingham silver plating firm.

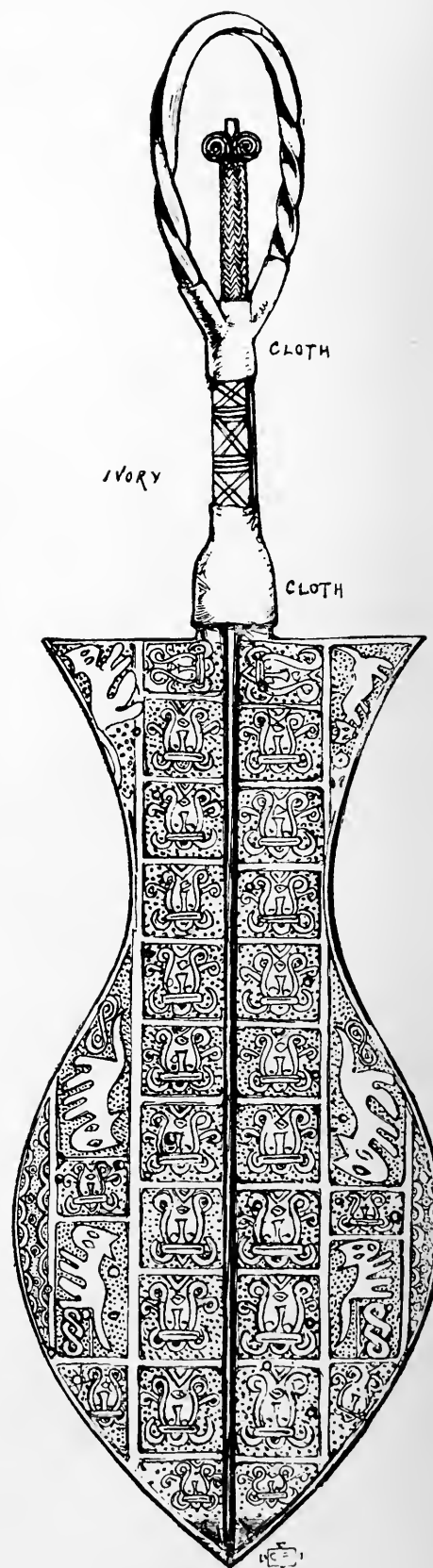


FIG. 70.

right hand on the palm of the left, saying repeatedly, *isse*—amen. (?)” C. Punch. “This nut is also used for taking the oath of friendship, ‘chopping juju’ as it is now called. There are many ways of doing it, but it mainly consists in eating portions of the same fruit or vegetable, and repeating a declaration that he, the native, would speak ‘true mouth’ with the white man, be white man’s brother, and always be honest with him, &c. This particular ceremony was performed with a kola nut placed on a brass tray with water poured on it, the



Fig. 70a.



Fig. 71.

Figs. 70a & 71.—Brass Figure. Front and side view of a Benin official holding an *Ebere* in the right hand and club as shown in fig. 61 in his left hand. Height 595 mm. Field Columbia Museum, Chicago.

native then touched himself with the water and nut and ate part of it, the other part being eaten by the white man” (Bacon, p. 100).

Evil spirits are all kept off by bedaubing oneself with chalk, as Burton records (p. 282). “Sawaye the ‘father-boy,’ brought, besides slave boys, a little daughter and two wives; these ladies began by decorating their foreheads and bosoms with



chalk, picked from the roadside fetish-house, and made into a paste with water in the palm. It is a prophylactic against the works of the enemy, and I observed that they renewed it during the return march." For the same end, as seen by Burton "almost every turn of the road showed some sign, a suspended calico cloth, a pot of water, or a heap of chalk sticks placed under what the Scotch call a 'fause-house,' or what the Australians call a breakwind, i.e., a pent roof, looking like the falling flap of a large bird-trap."<sup>1</sup>

"The King of Benin is fetiche, and the principal object of adoration in his dominions. He occupies a higher post here than the Pope does in Catholic Europe; for he is not only God's viceregent upon earth, but a god himself, whose subjects both obey and adore him as such, although I believe their adoration to arise rather from fear than love; as cases of heresy, if proved, are followed by prompt decapitation." Adams who writes (p. 112) as above adds that the king's deluded subjects believed the king required neither food nor sleep<sup>2</sup> (p. 113). In connection with this belief we may quote from Beauvais (p. 143): "The king is looked upon by his subjects as a demigod, who can live without food or drink, subject to death but destined to reappear on earth at the end of a definite period." Referring to the above statement of Adams, Burton says "The Obba (king) of Benin is fetish, and the object of adoration to his subjects; hence his power. European writers assert that he occupies here a higher post than the Roman Pontiff in Catholic Europe, and is considered not only as the vicegerent of deity, but as a deity himself, claiming the obedience and adoration of his subjects. This is partly true, but they forget that the personal character of the deity in question mainly decides his position as a man." In any case the people believed in the supernaturalness of the king, though not in his divinity, in our acceptance of the term, and this is well exemplified by the fact that no native either of Benin or neighbouring districts believed the king could be captured by the British, for they said he would turn into a bird and fly away (Granville and Roth. *The Jekries*, Jour. Anthropol. Inst., xxviii., p. 3.)<sup>3</sup> Gallwey's statement sums up the situation best when he says, "Benin city is a very powerful theocracy of fetish priests. The king is all powerful though he would appear to be somewhat in the hands of his big men and very much tied down by fetish customs." This position came out very clearly at the king's trial.

<sup>1</sup> On the way to Warri, Burton remarks (p. 146), "After ten minutes pulling we struck inland, where an earthen pot and a white cloth gave signs of Juju—these things might be mistaken by a novice for road-posts."

<sup>2</sup> It is criminal to suppose that the King of Dahomey ever eats or wants the refreshment of sleep (Norris, p. 105).

<sup>3</sup> I do not know how far such or similar transformations may be held as a belief by the Bini, but in connection with subject, the following note given me by a former resident of Onitsha is not uninteresting: "The strange and almost universal superstition prevails that certain people can at will turn themselves into one of the lower animals, some into a crocodile, a buffalo, or a leopard, and in this form they are supposed to wreak vengeance upon their enemies. An amusing illustration of this, an incident which occurred while I was at Onitsha, comes to my mind. One of the officers of the Royal Niger Company who was at that time at Onitsha, with great difficulty managed one night to shoot a buffalo. That same night an old lady in the town who had long been ill, died. She had the reputation of being able to turn into a buffalo, the theory being that while the spirit is absent in the beast, the person lies in an unconscious state. On this occasion the old lady had been unconscious for many hours before her death. There was hardly a person in Onitsha who did not believe that the Niger Company's Officer had murdered the old lady. So strong was the feeling, that the Niger Company had to pay a considerable sum to the relations of the aforesaid old lady as compensation."



The first mention of human sacrifices appears to be by D.R., followed by Merolla da Sorrento (Churchill II., p. 676), who describing what took place in or about the year 1682, when "Father Francis da Romano, Superior in the neighbouring Kingdom of Ouerri [Warri], and Father Filip da Figuar endeavoured to disturb a certain abominable sacrifice accustomed to be performed every year to the devil, for the benefit, as they [the Bini] alleged, of their dead ancestors. This sacrifice consisted of above 300 men, but at present there were only five to die, yet those all of the better sort. These missionaries, under the conduct of a certain negro friend, came to the third inclosure, capable of holding many hundreds of people. Here perceiving a great multitude gathered together, dancing and singing to divers instruments of their music, they clapped themselves down in a private place, the better to observe what they were going to do. This place happened to be that where they kept the knives designed to perform so inhuman an action. Not being able to conceal themselves long, they were quickly discovered by these wicked wretches, who coming towards them, leaping with great indignation, they soon drove the poor fathers out of the place they had so taken possession of." These men on being brought before the king reproached him with his evildoings, but in the end narrowly escaped with their lives.<sup>1</sup>

D.R. and Dapper speak of human sacrifices, but Nyendael refers to sacrifices only. We have seen that Dapper refers to sacrifices to the sea. Capt. John Adams writing previous to 1823 says: "Human sacrifices are not so frequent here as in some parts of Africa; yet besides those immolated on the death of great men, three or four are annually sacrificed at the mouth of the river, as votive offerings to the sea, to direct vessels to bend their course to this horrid climate."<sup>1</sup>

When Moffat and Smith visited the city in 1840, we are told that "At an open space near the market place, they were shocked by the sight of what may be termed a Golgotha, a place where human skulls were heaped up and bleaching in the sun. Still more were they disgusted by seeing in the outskirts of the town, not far from the king's place of residence, the bodies of men who had been but recently beheaded, with turkey buzzards feeding on them, and on the roof of a hut close by, two corpses in a sitting posture. The stench from an open pit near this revolting spot was almost insufferable, proceeding, as they believed, from human bodies in a state of putrefaction" (p. 191).<sup>2</sup>

About twenty years later, these horrors were fully confirmed by Burton. One day he writes, "As we advanced, the avenue shrank to a narrow lane, and in its deep shade we saw green and mildewed skulls lying about like pebbles. We thence emerged upon a broad open space, which we afterwards called the Field of Death. It was, indeed, a Golgotha, an Aceldama. Amongst the foul turkey buzzards

<sup>1</sup> According to Burton amongst the Ijos the custom is, "on occasions of ending war, to bury the victims up to the neck in earth, and after Canidian fashion, to let them starve when the modicum of food and water placed within reach is exhausted" (p. 150).

<sup>2</sup> Norris in Dahomey relates that "at the guard's house to the king's house at Abomey human skulls were fixed on stakes on the roofs; on each side of the door there was a pile of fifty human skulls, and on a stage opposite the door there were about two dozen human heads (p. 93); more freshly cut-off human heads were to be seen on the way through the courts to the king (p. 94); there was a terrible stench arising from the decomposing bodies of 32 horses and 36 men destroyed at a festival; (p. 100) gibbets with murdered men hanging by their ankles, birds of prey tearing out their entrails (p. 101), a man tied neck and heels and thrown down from a stage (p. 125) were also seen."

basking in the sun, and the cattle grazing upon the growth of a soil watered with blood, many a ghastly white object met the sight, loathsome remains of neglected humanity, the victims of customs and similar solemnities. Our first idea was that we were led into the city by this road that an impression might be produced upon us. Afterwards, it became apparent that all the highways conducting to the palace are similarly furnished" (pp. 287-8), and on another occasion he writes, "In the herbage, on the right of the path appeared the figure of a man bare to the waist, with arms extended, and wrists fastened to a framework of peeled sticks planted behind him. For a moment we thought the wretch might be alive, but a few steps convinced us of our mistake. He had been crucified after the African fashion, seated on a rough wooden stool, with a white calico cloth veiling the lower limbs, and between the ankles was an uncouth image of yellow clay. A rope of 'tie-tie,' fast bound round



Fig. 72. Juju Altar in Benin City. This was in a private house near the king's, in which a noble lived. It was part of his office to kill a slave every year for the king and put the skull on the altar. There was evidently some importance attached to this altar, as Aguramassi and Agbe insisted on Mr. Punch seeing it. From a photograph taken by Mr. R. K. Granville.

the neck to a stake behind, had been the immediate cause of death; the features still expressed strangulation, and the deed had been so recent that though the flies were there, the turkey buzzards had not yet found the eyes. The blackness of the skin and the general appearance proved that the sufferer was a slave. No emotion whatever, except holding the nose, was shown by the crowds of men and women that passed by, nor was there any sign of astonishment when I returned to sketch the horrid scene. Afterthoughts convinced the party that the poor wretch had been sacrificed on hearing of the white man's arrival at Gwato. It is some comfort to think that the murder was committed with as much humanity as possible; a slave bound for the other world is always plied with a bottle of rum before the fatal cord is made fast" (p. 287).<sup>1</sup> Later he says, "We were several times startled by the 'Voice of Oro' buzzing about the town, and in the morning it became manifest that the 'spirit' had been perambulating the place to some purpose" (p. 409). Then he visits

<sup>1</sup> The descriptions of human sacrifices given by Landolphe and Beauvais do not leave the impression that the victims were intoxicated before being killed.

"Close to the king's palace, the spot where another death had taken place; we walked there and found a corpse lying stark naked upon its back. A few people were standing by looking with the utmost *insouciance* at a horrid spectacle. The miserable's legs had been broken at mid-shin with awful violence, a deep gash was under the ramus of the left jaw, and in the hot clear morning air, the features had already become swollen and shapeless. This was a gratuitous barbarity. The African, less cruel because less intelligent than the European, the Asiatic and the American, rarely sacrifices men without stupifying them with drink or drugs. Oro, however, had manifestly slaughtered the poor devil in cold blood. Like the other sacrifice, this was a slave with a black skin and negro features, as great a contrast to the upper orders as the wretched peasant of Western Ireland to the English patrician. The freemen are careful not to expose themselves; moreover, the king would not put them to death, except for some flagrant violation of the law" (p. 410). On another occasion, "Sawaye kicked up a something which suspiciously resembled a man's eye. A deep splotch of blood a little further on explained matters. And more victims were hourly expected. The voice of Oro was explained to us as an effect of the king's piety; during the customs or mourning for his father he forbade, under pain of death, anyone to leave the house after eight p.m." (*ibid*, p. 411).

Of the *Oro*, Mr. C. Punch writes me: "I should imagine the Binis would have the *Oro* fetish, and at Eguatun many times they had a fetish when any woman caught outside was killed. I never, however, heard the *Oro* sound, i.e., the noise made in Yorubaland by twisting round a thin tongue of wood attached to a whip lash and handle, i.e., the Bull Roarer. The *Oro* men used to have a peculiar song instead. The fetish ceremonies were of daily occurrence, and night after night I have heard the drums beating, the king's long ivory horns blowing, and I knew some devilment was going on close at hand. But it was not always *Oro* that was heard, for there was the great ceremony of *Okerison*, when night prowling and murder were rampant. This was held in November. It lasted fourteen days. I believe there were 14 men called *Okerison*. They were armed with short iron bars and at night perambulated the place, and if they could, killed anyone they met. Sometimes the attacked party was the stronger and killed the *Okerison*. When the *Okerison* had killed fourteen men and proved his deeds to the king's satisfaction, he was given a title and an official position among the nobles. I was told the *Okerison* were members of the royal family, and this road was open to them to obtain official position. The different titles entailed the obligation to perform certain duties and rites in the court and country. The *Ojomo* was commander in chief, but I fancy the *Olubusheri* was the head fighting-man."

The capturing of victims by night casts a lurid light on the terror which must have continuously hovered over the heads of the Bini, for at one time even their king took part in these massacres at night. Beauvais, while stating that the king "only shows himself twice a year in public outside his palace," adds: "This does not prevent him from frequently roaming the streets at night; but if by chance he meet with any blacks they turn back or prostrate themselves, turning away their heads; the least infraction or the least look would be punished at once with death" (p. 143).

"There was a certain place in Benin which they wished me see, but I refused; it was where the prospective victims were kept in stock. Criminals, prisoners from other tribes, and more especially those accused of malignant witchcraft, were sent to Benin and kept in this place, which from its description seemed like a barracoon

where slaves were kept. In this were kept the victims to be used as required for sacrifices" (C. Punch). "If, on the day of sacrifice, there are not enough criminals in prison or in irons, the king sends out some of his servants to catch in the streets anybody that is going about without a light, and to take him to prison. If the captive happens to be poor, he is immediately taken to prison without chance of reprieve and has only to expect a speedy death; but a rich one may buy himself free by paying a fine. Even a slave to the greatest fiadors is not excepted from this treatment, but his master is allowed to exchange him for another. In the same manner any Fetiziero who wants to sacrifice someone to the devil, gets possession of a man by order of the king, and may do with him what he likes" (Dapper).

Of the Golgotha, Gallwey remarks: "Just before reaching the city we had to pass through rather an unpleasant half-mile of fairly open country. We presumed it was the place where all criminals' bodies were deposited. The path was strewn on both sides with dead bodies in every stage of decomposition; skulls grinned at you from every direction—a gruesome experience in its way. Human sacrifices are of frequent occurrence, and the rule is one of terror. The usual form of sacrifice is crucifixion. We saw several crucified victims during our stay in Benin city, on the plain outside the king's residence."

Mr. C. Punch had to make a closer acquaintance with one of these bone repositories than was pleasant: "Outside the compounds running through the city, was a broad common, or avenue. When I was there this was littered with bones and skulls, as I well remember, on the occasion when I went with Consul Annesley. We did not like our treatment, and to show we were annoyed refused to enter a house. We put our beds down in this open compound and made a camp. We had to remove bones and skulls for the purpose. When we first arrived at Guato we found on the side of the path the remains of a man, tied up between trees and disembowelled. Excepting the isolated cases of victims tied up in trees near the king's house, which it was impossible to ignore, I absolutely refused to be a witness to any executions, and so I can only speak by hearsay. It was expressly stipulated by me, with the king, that no sacrifices or anything contrary to humanity should take place at Guatun, which was to be kept for the Europeans. The King kept strictly to his promise while I was there, though shortly after I left two boys were sent to Guatun, and after being tied up between trees beside the path, were cut open and left exposed. In Benin itself the usual ceremonies went on, but I was told with fewer victims than in Adola's time. The King himself told me he was sick of it all, but that he could not discontinue the customs of his ancestors. Two trees near the king's house, growing close together, were used for sacrifices, either for rain or fine weather, and whenever I visited Benin this post was always occupied. Sticks were fastened crosswise to make a ladder. I am told the victim (which might be male or female) never resisted or objected, mounted the ladder himself, and was then spatchcocked out, tied by his wrists and legs. Sometimes the victim was left to die from hunger and exposure, and at others a piece of stick was tied uprightly behind his back, a piece of 'tie-tie' put round the throat, and he was killed by garotting, the body remaining exposed."

But the full extent of the horrors entailed by the human sacrifices was probably never fully understood until the Punitive Expedition entered the city. Dr. Felix Norman Roth in his letters home speaks of what he saw in the following words. "At each corner of the city wall were two big sacrificial trees. In front of them, stakes had been driven into the ground and by means of cross-pieces a framework had been made; on this framework in front of one tree were two bodies, and on the

other framework in front of the other tree there was one body. At the foot of these trees the whole ground was strewn with human bones, and decomposing human bodies with heads cut off.<sup>1</sup> A little back from the trees, the bush was filled with dead

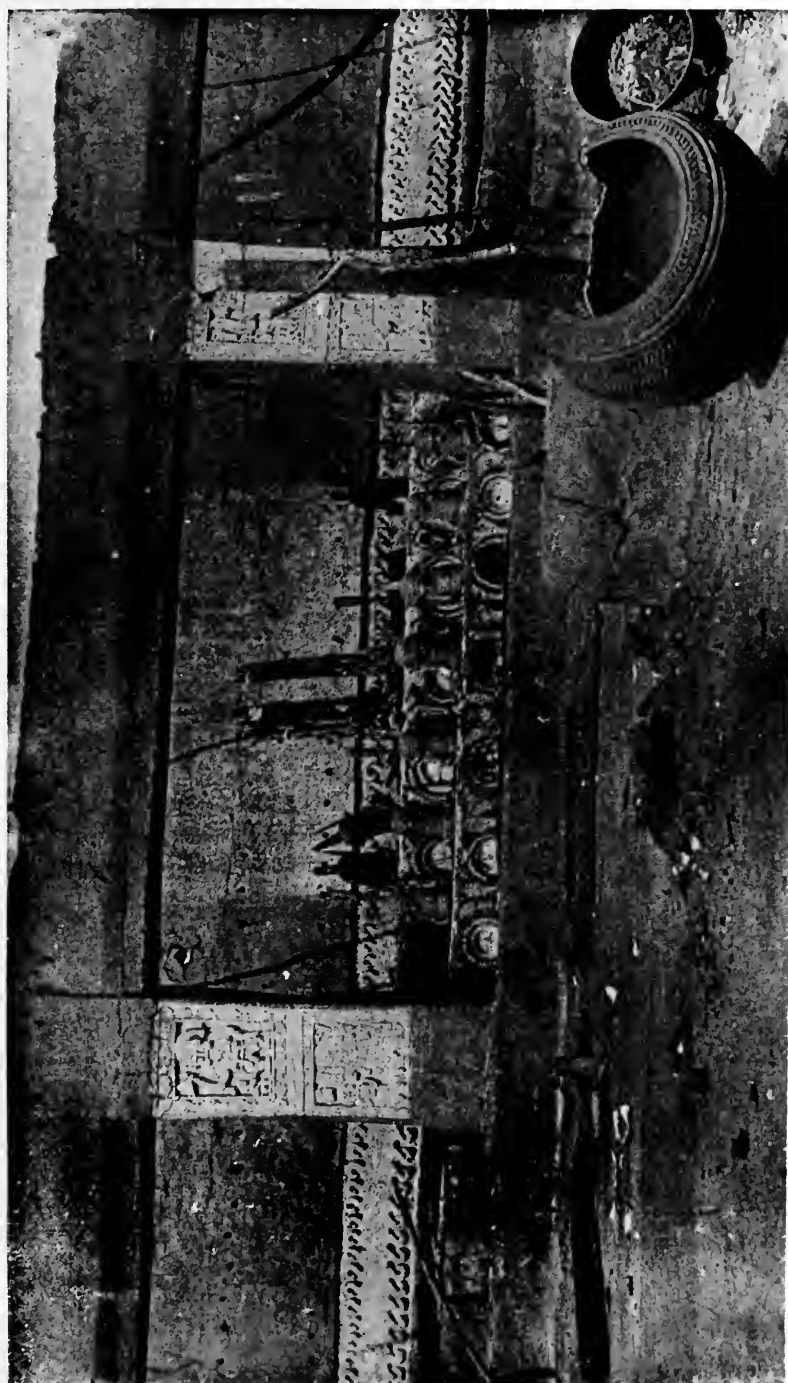


Fig. 73.—Juju Altar in Benin City consisting of a series of raised clay banks, the sides of which are inlaid with European plates. This mode of decoration is, however, not distinctive of Benin, as for instance, Mr. C. Punch records seeing a similar arrangement in Esupu up the New Calabar River. On the banks are carved wooden heads (see fig. 74) covered with a thin layer of brass, hammered into shape on the wood. These wooden heads are likewise furnished with a curious feather-like ornament on the left hand side but they supported no tusks. From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville.

human bodies in all stages of decomposition, mostly decapitated and blown out by the sun; the mouths were skewered.<sup>2</sup> Past the king's compound,

<sup>1</sup> "Three of the bodies looked like those of white men, but as they had been there some time and the heads cut off and removed, it was impossible to decide whether they were European or negro; we judged them to be bodies of white men by an examination of their hands and feet, but not being certain, we resolved not to mention the matter further then"—F.N.R.

<sup>2</sup> In Ashanti, until quite recently, a man to be captured was practically skewered first so that he could not utter the password, when captured, and so claim the king's clemency.



up the main road a horrible sight met my gaze, for strewn about an acre of ground with little grass growing, were several hundred skulls and newly dead bodies; the owners of the latter had all been sacrificed, as the bodies were all tied with their



FIG. 74.

Wooden head covered with thin brass as shown on the altar in fig. 73 in Benin City. Similar objects were to be seen on the altar in the house of the Ewagwe. Mr. C. Punch thinks the feather, of brass covered wood, had a religious meaning. "The Ahurakus wore them so, using the red feathers from a parrot's tail. I also saw a priest in the Ikale country dressed with just such a feather of large size. I fancy he belonged to the Benin fetish, as he spoke of it. Ikale is in Lagos territory but the people are distinctly of Bini or Sobo extraction."

hands behind them, and also to stakes driven into the ground; the victims seemed for the greater part to have been tied down on their backs, but some on their bellies, and some spread-eagled; there appeared to have been no rule as to how the killing was to be done. In some of the pits could be plainly seen a lot of dead bodies, and the stench was overpowering. On the first afternoon of our arrival, we heard faint noises coming from one of these pits, and on sending down a party to ascertain whether any living victims were there, two boys in a very emaciated condition were brought up. One (Fig. 66) had three curious holes in his head caused by a sacrificial club, and the other had had his neck beaten almost to a pulp by the wooden rattles found on the altars of the juju houses. Both these lads recovered and stated they had belonged as carriers to Phillips' ill-fated expedition; they also stated that all the white men belonging to that expedition were killed on the road. Other captives were released from other pits. One captive who had been saved by our arrival had belonged to a gang of nine from Accra, constituted of Krubos, Jekris, Sobos and Lagos men, who had been sent up to collect rubber. These men must have been watched by the Bini, for they had revolvers, but one night when asleep they were pounced upon by the Bini and taken prisoners. They had been in Benin about two months, and were only allowed to sleep while standing, being tied to posts in the

huts by means of a rope round their necks, so that if they tried to lie down they



would hang themselves. Other captives were found fixed to big logs with staples driven in over their wrists, but an examination of their wrists proved they had not been there long; in some cases, it took us over an hour to cut the staple out of the hard wood; it also took some four men to lift one of the logs, and as only two men were attached to each log, there was not much chance of the poor fellows running away. Other captives had heavy chains on wrists and ankles. Besides human beings, animals had also been sacrificed. In one compound I saw a dog, some fowls and other birds hanging by the legs; one fowl was still fluttering round the neck of a more than life-sized human figure; the latter was roughly carved of wood, and seated on pedestals with arms folded it reminded me of ancient Egyptian monuments."

Commander Bacon tells us that on the advance of the Punitive Expedition "laid on the grass where two paths met, was a young woman horribly mutilated, a rough wooden gag tied in her mouth was clenched tightly by her teeth, which with the expression of her face told of the agony of her murder. At her feet lay a goat with its knees broken. I asked the guide what it meant, and he said it was to prevent white man coming further.<sup>1</sup> A few yards further brought us to another; this time a man, with his arms tied behind him, lying on his face in the path, but for some reason not decapitated, which as a rule is the second form of sacrifice." (p. 80.) When in the city, Bacon refers to one of the Jekri carriers of Phillips' expedition, who "was led out for sacrifice, only the boss juju man said his head was a bad shape, and would bring bad luck to the city, so he got off." (p. 98.)

"To convey," says Dr. Allman in "The Lancet," of 3rd July, 1897, "some idea of the number of crucifixions and sacrifices witnessed in this 'City of Blood' it will be necessary to enter into a few gruesome details. Facing the principal entrance to the king's compounds, stood a large sacrificial tree on which two bodies were crucified, and scattered in all directions around its base, lay numbers of decapitated and disembowelled sacrifices, in various stages of decomposition, amongst which were the decapitated remains of three Europeans, who had evidently been gagged and their hands bound behind their back before execution. A few hundred yards to the south of the main entrance, already alluded to, stood another sacrificial tree, on which was crucified the body of a woman, and at its base three other eviscerated bodies, also women, were found. Continuing my way to the south I came upon the large plain leading to the Gwato path, and there witnessed one of the most horrible sights that it is possible for the human mind to conceive, *i.e.* one hundred and seventy six newly decapitated and mutilated human sacrifices strewn about in all directions, besides countless numbers of skeletons—truly, a most gruesome sight, and one not to be easily forgotten. I will not describe any more of these horrible details; suffice it to say that sacrifices were found in nearly every portion of the city, some of the bodies being most brutally and cruelly mutilated. Before closing this tale of blood I may, however, give a brief sketch of the huge pits, seventeen in number, found principally in the vicinity of the regal palace. These pits were of enormous dimensions—12 feet in diameter and 40 feet deep. Seven of these contained human sacrifices, from fifteen to twenty in each pit; out of these 'foulsome pits' the stench emitted being intolerable, we rescued with great difficulty seven unfortunate captives, who for several days afterwards could hardly realise what had happened; two of them were carriers on Mr. Phillips' ill-fated expedition."

<sup>1</sup> A fetish snake was placed in the paths by the Whydahs on one occasion to prevent the Dahomans attacking them. (Norris, p. 69.)

In the above accounts we find that men or women have been indiscriminately sacrificed, yet Beauvais writing of the Yam and Coral Feasts (p. 144) says: "On both occasions they sacrifice man and male animals only; they never sacrifice women or female animals, either on account of their usefulness or so as not to interrupt procreation."

In the interesting account of Bini customs collected by Captain Roupell from some of the native officials, we get the first clear account of the various sacrifices and what evils they were intended to avert. They say "The first King of Benin, Eweka, we are told, made human sacrifices, and taught his son to do so too—that is why we



FIG. 75.—Altar in Benin City with peeled wands, earthenware pots (Figs. 79 and 80) and carved staves (Fig. 76). "The small wands peeled white, figured in many, perhaps, of the rites, and were laid upon the altar afterwards. In Cheet-ham's time they were carried in front of the Europeans. The king's method of closing a road was to place two such wands crossed in front of its entrance. Once, in my time, he wished to close the road from Igoro to Ikro, and put up the wands, but his orders were disobeyed. He wished to kill a man, and lay him in the path to make the closure respected, but I asked him not to do so, and the wands not being sufficient, they were finally taken away and the road was open" (C. Punch). From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville.

have always made sacrifices—but now the white man has come, he must look out for the country. The people who were kept for sacrifice were bad men or men with bad sickness—they were all slaves; if a man had a slave who killed man or did very bad, he could give him to Overami who put him in jail, and when a man was needed to be sacrificed for the good of the town, they could take him. The ordinary yearly sacrifices were:

"1. The anniversary of Adolo's death. Adolo was Overami's father. For this, the great sacrifice of the year, twelve men were taken, twelve cows, twelve goats, twelve sheep, and twelve fowls. The offerings were brought into the big com-

pound and put in line in front of and facing the altar ; then Overami dressed in very fine clothes came in and calling Adolo his father loudly by name, said like this. ' Oh, Adolo, our father, look after all Ado [Great Benin], don't let any sickness come to us, look after me and my people, our slaves, cows, goats, and fowls, and everything in the farms.' Then the men who were in front were led to the well at the back of the compound with gags tied in their mouths, and held each by four strong men ; the executioners cut off their heads, which, with the bodies, were thrown into the pit. The animals were killed near the altar, and the blood from them was sprinkled on the big ivories and brass work. The beef was then distributed among the people. These twelve men were bad men who had been collected during the year—it was just after this that Mr. Phillips and his men wanted to come—the king did not want it [*i.e.*, the Expedition which would prevent human sacrifice], as white man fashion and black man fashion are different."

"2. The Bead [Coral] Sacrifice. Once a year at the end of the rainy season, all the king's beads were brought out by the boys in whose care they were kept. The beads were put in a heap, and a slave was brought in and made to kneel down ; then the king with a spear 'chock,' *i.e.*, cut or struck his head so that the blood ran over the beads ; then the 'boy' in whose care these beads were, put his hands on them, and Overami addressing the beads said : ' Oh, beads, when I put you on give me wisdom and don't let any juju or bad thing come near me.' Then the slave was told : ' So you shall tell the bead juju when you see him.' The slave was then led out and beheaded, the head being brought in again, the beads and the men touched it, and it was finally left at the foot of the big Oroco tree in the first compound.<sup>1</sup> Thompson Ibodudu the white black man was killed last year for bead sacrifice. When we were going to kill him he prophesied that if we killed him, the white man would come and spoil Ado, so now everyone says ' See what Ibodudu said has indeed come to pass.'

"3. The sacrifice to the Rain God. If there is too much rain, then all the people would come from farm and beg Overami to make juju, and sacrifice to stop the rain. Accordingly a woman was taken,<sup>2</sup> a prayer made over her, and a message saluting the rain god put in her mouth, then she was clubbed to death and put up in the execution tree so that the rain might see."

"4. The sacrifice to the Sun. In the same way if there is too much Sun so that there is a danger of the crops spoiling, Overami can make sacrifice to the Sun God.

"5. The sacrifice to the God of Health. When the doctor had declared a man had died owing to Ogiwo, if they think an epidemic imminent, they can tell Overami that Ogiwo vex ; and then he can take a man and a woman, all the town can fire

<sup>1</sup> For other accounts of the coral feast, see p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> In Adams' time at Lagos, young women brought up for the purpose were impaled, one annually, to propitiate the favour of the rain goddess (p. 97). A European resident at Onitsha once nearly got into trouble over rain-making. He tells me : " I can remember once soon after my arrival at Onitsha getting into trouble through what I meant to be a perfectly innocent enquiry. It had the appearance of rain, and meeting an African on the road, I asked him if it was likely to rain. My friend became greatly excited at this question. ' Am I God ' he said, ' to make it rain or stop raining ? ' I was somewhat astonished at the outburst, and hastened to assure him, as well as my very limited knowledge of his language would allow, that I meant no offence by the question. It seems, however, that he thought I was endeavouring to pick a quarrel with him. There are men in these parts who go by the name of ' rain-makers,' and who profess to have the power to make it rain or stop raining when they like. This man thought I had taken him for a ' rain-maker.' "

guns and beat drums, the man and the woman are brought out, and the head jujuman can make this prayer. 'Oh, Ogiwo, you are a very big man, don't let any sickness come for Ado, make all farm good and every woman born man son.' Then to the slaves he would say, 'So you shall tell Ogiwo, salute him proper, salute him proper.' They were then clubbed to death, and hauled up and tied in the sacrifice trees."

"When a man dies he goes to god there Ogiwo, and all spirits live, but god puts white man in another country."

To this list of occasions when it was customary to shed human blood, which omits all mention of the Yam feast, we may add the general one of common danger when an enemy was at the city's gates. In fact, any excuse could be made for sacrifice, as was the case when Landolphe once visited the city, for the king had an unlimited power, being fetish, and his great chiefs, who were at the bottom of the massacre of Phillips party, evidently had no one to check their deeds.

Neither Dapper nor the officials say that the blood of the human victims was sprinkled on the ivories and metal work on the altars, but Landolphe noticed it (I., p. 55), and Dr. Allman, who was with the Punitive Expedition, informs me he found blood and human entrails on the altars, and my brother, likewise medical officer to the Expedition, tells me the same. The native officials, no doubt, have some diffidence in giving the whole truth on this matter. Captain Roupell tells me that in the com-

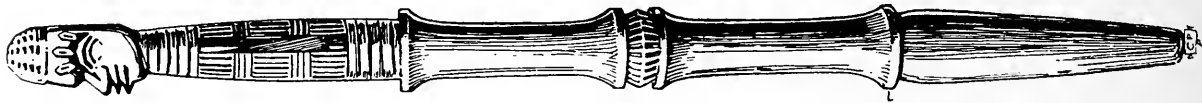


FIG. 76.—Wood Rattle, used in ceremonies (and placed on altars, Fig. 75.) to rouse the attention of the spirit. In the possession of the Author. On this, Mr. Punch remarks: "The carved staves, sometimes of ivory, were supposed to represent bambus. I saw some half carved, and though often ornamented with figures, the main idea portrayed was a jointed bambu. The top joint was hollowed, and a small piece of wood or ivory left inside so that when the staff was struck on the ground it rattled. This was done to call the attention of the spirit invoked. I never heard of these staves being used as a means of execution, nor were they strong enough for such a purpose. The king himself shewed me their real object, and rattled the stick most vigorously."

pound where the altar to the King's father stood, the ground near the well was, for many yards from the altar, caked hard and green in colour with the blood of human victims sacrificed there.

The officials do not refer to the annual parade of their King, but of course their notes do not profess to mention all the festivals. From their descriptions, however, it is to be seen that the main object of the festivals was the sending of prayers, by means of the special messengers, for the welfare of the community, to the spirits of the departed, or to other spirits, such as the spirits of the beads, the Rain-God, the Sun-God, the God Ogiwo, thus explaining a cult of world-wide prevalence.

The "Making of one's father" is thus referred to by Dapper. "They also keep, by order of the King, several feast-days in remembrance of the deceased kings, on which occasions they make horrible sacrifices of men and animals, amounting to four or five hundred a year; but they never slaughter more than twenty-three men a day.<sup>1</sup> These are mostly criminals who deserve death, and who have been kept

<sup>1</sup> The King of Dahomey at his customs, *i.e.*, "making his father," sacrificed men, women, horses, cattle, goats, fowl, etc., cut off their heads, and threw them into a pit, to go and serve, as he said, his father in the next world. Brandy, maize, kerchiefs, silks and all sorts of victuals and stuffs were also thrown in. On the death of his father he immolated 800 to 900 people" (Norris II., p. 30).



FIG. 77.—Bronze Bell, used during ceremonies to call the attention of the spirit invoked, Height, 6½ in. (16 cm.) In the possession of Mr. C. Punch.



FIG. 78.—Bronze Bell used during ceremonies to call attention to the spirit invoked. Height, 4 in. (10 cm.) In the possession of the Author.



imprisoned during the festivals. Mr. C. Punch describes from hearsay the annual ceremony of "making his father" by the king: "On the day of the ceremony, the open space, which I have already spoken of, was packed with people from the country. The victims were ranged in rows, sitting down opposite the gate of the compound. On this day, the king came out and was seen by the people. He was dressed in cloths of gold and silver tissue, and coral head dress. He addressed the victims in a kind voice, telling them he was sending them with a message to his father. They were to salute his father, and tell him that his son was not ready to join him yet, but he sent them, the victims, to be with his father and salute him.

"Most of the victims, I was told, said 'yes they were ready to go,' and would do the king's command. Here and there, one or two would rise, for they were unbound, and approach the king, and beg him to let them off. Some he would excuse. Then the massacre began. The Okerison went round with an instrument like a metal tube with a heavy spike working in it, with a knob of metal at the end. The victim remained sitting, and the Okerison placed the tube on his head and then struck the heavy knob and spike so as to penetrate the skull. I was told only the first few were so despatched, and afterwards assistant executioners cut off heads with cutlasses, the victim being stretched out by ropes to his head and feet. The remains were afterwards gathered up and thrown into the hole in the compound."

In the same way as the human sacrifices were originally only part of the religious observances of the Bini, so too were the periodical parades of the king and his court, the yam feast, and other festivals. According to D. R., the king "twice a year<sup>1</sup> makes a circuit of the town; that is, he goes out of his court to view here and there, and visits the town. He then shows all his power, wealth, and all merry making things and amusements he can think of, and can bring forth. He is accompanied by all his wives, which may be above six hundred in number, who are, however, not all his wedded wives, but his concubines."

By Dapper we are told, "The king shews himself only once a year to his people, going out of his court on horseback, beautifully attired with all sorts of royal ornaments, and accompanied by three or four hundred noblemen on horseback and on foot, and a great number of musicians before and behind him, playing merry tunes on all sorts of musical instruments, as it is shown in the preceding picture of Benin city. Then he does not ride far from the court, but soon returns thither after a little tour. Then the king causes some tame leopards that he keeps for his pleasure to be led about in chains; he also shows many dwarfs and deaf people, whom he likes to keep at his court. At this festival, ten, twelve, or thirteen slaves or even more, are killed by strangling or beheading, in the king's honour, for they believe that these slaves, after having been dead some time, go to another country and return to life again to a better condition, everyone getting his slaves again." Evidently, however, there were two royal processions in the year, for Dapper continues "There is also a day on which the king makes a great show of all his riches, consisting of jasper, beadwork, and other things at the court, for everybody to see them, giving away many slaves, women, and other things to those who deserve it. Then he also grants many appointments to the government of towns and villages."

Dapper thus makes the bead or coral festival a distinct one from the annual parade of the king, but Nyendaël makes one festival of the two. He

<sup>1</sup> When Gallwey visited the city, he was informed (p. 129) "the king only goes among his people once a year, the occasion being one of general rejoicing and feasting."





FIG. 80.—Fragments of a Pot of coarse red pottery.  
Height 12 in. (30½ cm.) British Museum.

As regards these pots (Figs 79 and 80) Mr. C. PUNCH saw the Ahuraku "making his head" one year. Part of the rite was in the form of a feast, and portions of this feast were sent round the town to various people in earthen pots, and some of the pots used were laid upon the altars.



FIG. 79.—Globular Vessel of Buff Pottery. Height,  
9½ in. (24 cm.) British Museum.

says, "The coral feast happened when I was at this great prince's court<sup>1</sup>; which, though it affords nothing very extraordinary, I will yet describe to you because it is the only day in the year when the king appears in public. He came most magnificently dressed to the second plain, where, under a very fine canopy a seat was placed for him; and there also his wives, and a great number of his officers of the first rank, all in their richest dresses, ranged themselves around him, and soon after began a procession, after which the king also removed from his throne in order to sacrifice to the gods in the open air and thereby begin the feast; which action is accompanied with the universal loud acclamations of his people. After passing about a quarter of an hour in this manner, he returned to, and again sat down in his place, where he stayed two hours, in order to give the remainder of the people time to perform their devotions; which done he returned home. The remainder of the day was spent in splendid treating and feasting, and the king caused all sorts of provisions and 'pardon-wine' to be distributed in common to all, and all the great followed his example; so that on that day nothing is seen throughout the whole city but all possible marks of rejoicing."

Legroing and Balon thus describe a coral feast: "About 3 p.m., 14th May, 1787, the king preceded by people carrying all his coral, and accompanied by his grandees, approached a mausoleum in one of his courts. He was simply dressed in white, and was followed by doleful music. He stood on the lowest step of the tomb and everyone stood upright in two parallel lines, the first places being reserved for us. Then an unfortunate man with a gag in his mouth was brought in and made to kneel down, whereupon one of the grandees, armed with a club, dealt him a blow on the head, and as the blood flowed out, the negroes called fiadors hastened up with the bunches of coral, which is the royal ornament, to make them touch the bleeding head. A bullock and a sheep were also sacrificed, and the tomb sprinkled with the blood. During this ceremony the king laughed boisterously, signing to us to see what was going on." (p. 177.) Beauvais speaks of human and animal sacrifices as essential for the coral festival, the main object of which is to immerse the coral of the king, of his wives, and of the fiadors, in the blood of the victim, in order to induce the coral fetish never to let them want this precious commodity. (p. 144.)

Nyendaël remarks: "I was not able to discover the nature and object of this coral feast, because the negroes would not give me any account or explanation of it: their only answer to that question whenever I put it being, 'we don't know anything about it.'" Coral was highly esteemed and was a royal gift. Details of this will be found in the chapters relating to Government and Trade.

There was also the feast of "Making one's Head," perhaps not a very important one, or only important to certain individuals. "The Ahuraku, at Eguatun 'made his head' once a year. To say 'my head is good' does not mean I am clever, but that 'my destiny is good.' For instance, I have often been told since that 'my head was good to have come out of Benin safely.' Every year the Ahuraku 'made his head' so as to have good luck for the coming year. When the king 'made his head' there would probably be human sacrifices." (C. Punch.)

An important feast, not mentioned by Roupell's officials but nevertheless probably included by them in the sacrifices to the Rain God and Sun God, was that known as the Yam Feast. Of this Beauvais says: "Although the yam feast is not

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he says Benin in his time was only a large village, hence one would surmise there could be no great prince's court.

held without human sacrifices, they are not its chief object. The yam is for the Bini what wheat is to Europeans, and in order to get the natives to attend to its culture and get them out of their natural lethargy, a sort of trick is played every year. After the natives have been immolated, an earthenware pot containing some soil and a yam from the last season are brought before the king. The prince in full view of his subjects places the root in the pot and covers it with the soil. The songs and dances then proceed. While the people are giving themselves up to their pleasures, the fiadors who enjoy the intimacy of the king, substitute a similar pot in which there is



Fig. 81.—Bronze Rattle? Something similar is made in Yoruba for calling Shango, the lightning god; small stones are put inside and it is rattled.

a well developed yam, and the people, who firmly believe in this rapid growth admire it much. The bigger the growth the more plentiful will the season be, and they manifest their satisfaction accordingly" (p. 144). Landolphe only refers to it as follows: "Yams are harvested only once a year, at the end of June or in the early days of July. When the harvest is nearly ready, the King of Benin declares several fast days throughout the Kingdom, and prohibits his subjects from eating new yams until he has received his first twentieth. A festival is then proclaimed called the



Fig. 82.—Metal Pot, similar to earthenware pots such as were in domestic use, and as were put full of food on the juju altar at a festival.

Yam Feast, which lasts four days, in which dancing and farcical merry-making take place, and forms one of the four chief annual feasts" (I., p. 56). "The feast of new yams was moveable at the king's discretion between about Nov. 10th to the end of the year. The whole of the town was crowded with people to see the plays and there was a regular orgie. It was during this time that Phillips decided to go up,

and it would be a bad time to go. No one could eat new yams till the king had made the ceremonies" (C. Punch).<sup>1</sup>

"Special fetes have no fixed dates, and there are some which depend upon the wishes and means of individuals. The king generally celebrates twice a month, during which an indefinite number of slaves and animals succumb" (Beauvais, p. 145). One such, which Landolphe says was got up in his honour, he thus describes: "In an immense court I saw at least 2000 negroes of both sexes and all ages; in their midst were twelve enormous drums, seven feet long, made of hollow bambu covered with goat skin at one end, which gave forth a rumbling noise under the strokes of drum-sticks. These lugubrious sounds were joined to those of a dozen blacks, some of whom blew like madmen into elephant tusks which were perforated at intervals like our church serpents, whilst others did not succeed much better with cowherds'

<sup>1</sup> The celebration of the Yam festival appears to be widespread, from Dahomey to Calabar, but is differently carried out in the various localities (Allen & Thomson, London, Narr. II., p. 398).

horns. The result was an awful discord which one must have heard to appreciate. During this concert, the king was seated in a tent [*sic*] surrounded by the big men and a multitude of courtezans, such as are met with in many parts of the world." Much lascivious dancing was going on, and the king asking him what he thought of it all, he replied without lying that he had never seen anything like it. "While the musicians



FIG. 83.—The Malaku's House in Gwato (*not* the Juju House in Benin). *Daily Graphic*, Jan. 14, 1897.  
 "The figures are the Malaku, his wife and children. This appears to be the only case in which there were real idols in the Benin country" (C.P.)

increased their din a black was brought in gagged, with a fine white cloth round his loins, and stopped about a hundred paces from the king, and in the meanwhile the music got worse. Two masked men covered with a dress which touched the ground, that looked to be seven feet high approached the king to receive his instructions, and at the end of a few minutes they took their places at the side of the victim. One of them had a heavy club, perforated at the top, where was to be seen a small carved figure representing the devil, which when shaken made a noise like that of a bell. He tells the victim that Lolocou *i.e.* the devil, is about to take him. The other man who is equally armed, places himself behind the unfortunate man, to whom the first executioner

has presented the demon's fetish to kiss—that is the death signal. Struck on the head in front and behind, the victim totters but is caught by the executioners, who lay him on the ground, leaning his head over a large copper basin, when it is cut off by a single stroke of the *damas* [*sic*], and the flowing blood is sprinkled on the tombs of the kings." (I., pp., 114-118.) It is fair to mention that Landolphe tried



FIG. 84.—Juju altar in King's compound, Benin. On the altar are seen the large bronze heads, bearing the much carved tusks, the finest specimens of which come from here. In the background can be seen the carved bambu-like staves (fig. 76) and an ebere (fig. 69 or 70); There are also small figures and bells. All the bronze heads have the curious winged dress. From a photograph taken by Mr. C. Punch, May, 1891.

to induce his servant to get the king to stop this murder, but the man replied that if he made such an attempt, his own head might be made to drop. (I., p. 117.) About this time Beauvais writes: "In 1787 I was an eye-witness at the yam festival, and at two special ones. One of the latter was celebrated by the king. Fifteen men, fifteen bullocks, fifteen rams and fifteen cocks were sacrificed. At the festival celebrated by the war-captain Jabou [Ojomo] who is one of the king's four ministers, three men, one bull, one bullock, one ram and three cocks were killed. With the exception of the number of victims, and of less gorgeous arrangements, the ceremony was the same as carried out for the king. It was as follows: "Several hours before the ceremony the minister and his suite came to the king's compound; the suite consisted of several



musicians, some whistling in a sort of extended cornet, others in flutes faulty and discordant, while some drummed on copper cauldrons; then came the fiadors of one, two, and three coral necklaces, who immediately preceded the minister. Behind him were a dozen of his wives who, I was told, were the most favoured ones for the time being. He was richly dressed according to the custom of the country, and held in his hand a large oval cutlass, perforated like one of our cullenders, and finished off at the end of the handle by a large fixed ring; he wore several pieces of cloth of various values, placed one above the other round his loins, as low as his knees; the rest of his body was nude excepting his three row coral necklace (*à trois branches*) and several others of agate and of glass trinkets. Several feathers of the white heron (*Ardea alba*, Linn.) mixed with the tail feathers of the veuve (*Emberiza vidua*, Linn.) decorated his head. The women, dressed like him, were so weighted with necklaces that their chests were almost entirely covered. Their hair, artistically arranged, and divided by meshes into which were worked pieces of coral, was formed into an indefinite number of small circles which contrasted coquettishly with the black colour of their skin and hair, the little short hairs in front being singed either by the sun's rays or by means of a hot iron, as I was told. The war captain remained with the king about 75 minutes, when he returned as he came, with his suite, but he had hardly gone half-way when all of a sudden he began to imitate the movements of a drunken man ready to fall down, rolling from side to side towards the people, who fled precipitately. He repeated this three times, and each time he threw his cutlass in the air and caught it smartly by the handle. Arrived at his door, but before his third inspiration, the minister signed me to follow him, but I dare not speak to him. I was introduced into a hall, where I remained more than half an hour with the fiador who had charge of me, and of a ram whose approaching fate I was far from guessing. At the end of this time I saw all the minister's wives arrive, about 400 in number; they seemed fairly pretty and well made; their colour varied from a deep black to a tint inclining to yellow, from which I concluded they came from various countries. It is hardly necessary to say that they looked at me with as much interest as I looked at them. (pp. 147-8.) I was then conducted to the locality where the ceremonies are held. It is a large place about 26 to 33 metres (80-100 feet) long, and about two-thirds as large. One end was covered by a roof, under which there is an altar differing little from ours; it was ornamented on both sides by two large elephant tusks, on which I noticed rudely carved figures, which appeared to me to have no other object than to satisfy the fancy of the workman. The minister's wives were placed on steps on each side of the altar; at their feet, to the right, the minister was seated in a wooden armchair; he placed me with my conductor opposite to him. In front were the fiadors, seated on benches, the animals to be killed were placed on the left at the opposite side, and the end opposite the altar was full of people. Up to then I had seen no signs of human victims. At a sign from the War Captain, the ceremony began by a plaintive and monotonous chant by the people, who accompanied it by rubbing their hands, or rather beating them together. The first chant being finished, my attention was called to a noise at the other end. And what did I see? The remembrance of a similar scene, which I now saw for a second time, restrains my pen and still causes me to shudder. There were three negroes, almost entirely nude, with a single piece of white cloth round their loins, their hands tied behind their backs, and in their mouths a bone [gag] of what sort of an animal I do not know, fastened at its ends by two pieces of string fastened behind the head. A tall negro, with a sword by his side, and a piece of red cloth round his loins, made them kneel



down. All the blacks assured me they were not criminals. But, if so, why tie their hands behind them and why gag them? The arrival of these unfortunates was the signal for the commencement of the second chant, which was as unpleasant and



FIG. 85

Bronze figure heads from altars in Benin city; everyone has a hole in the top. The headdresses represent coral or agate bead headdresses worn by the kings of Benin and Warri. At his trial for the murder of Phillips' party the lately deposed King wore a winged headdress similar to the one on the figure on the right. On asking Mr. C. Punch as to this whether the pointed headdress represented a female headdress he replied, "I do not think the pointed head-dress indicates a female head as the Benin women do not dress their hair to a point. I saw all the king's wives one evening in gala dress and saw no such headdress worn. There are numerous male figures in carving and cast work which have the pointed headdress. The bronze heads were said to be representations of dead kings, but I never put much importance on these statements."

as inharmonious as the first. When this ceased, three fiadors came up to receive from the War Captain a stick each, of a sort of hollow reed (*roseau creux*). They dipped them three times in the hole containing the offerings made in the centre of the ground in front of the altar, and then, retiring to the victims, struck them lightly

each three times on the forehead. The victims appeared calm and not afraid of the fate which awaited them. I noticed also, in confirmation of the fact above mentioned, that they all possessed visible defects which would have caused their rejection by the slave traders. The people now monotoned the third chant, which lasted longer than the other two, until after the execution. The executioner, who is not a priest, but a man devoted to this function and to the cutting off of criminals' heads, advanced to the middle of the place, and after receiving the approbation of the minister retired to the victims, whose heads he cut off after having thrown them on to the ground on their bellies. Each head was presented to the people and the bodies carried and drawn



FIG. 86.—Bronze head. This is probably one of a series like those shown in Figs. 84 and 85, for carrying tusks. In Bacon's book there is an illustration of an altar with a series of seven heads very similar to this one, each carrying a tusk (pp. 87 & 89). There is also in the British Museum a copy of a sketch by Capt. Egerton of a series of bronze heads carrying tusks. There were, however, some altars on which the carved tusks simply stood against the wall and were *not* supported by heads (F. N. Roth). Lieut. King mentions tusks placed in rows curiously carved, the points turned towards the wall, but says nothing about heads. Legroing and Balon saw the mausoleum of the father of the War Captain, and says of it: "The chief decorations consisted in eight carved wooden heads [*figures* = faces] which supported eight elephant tusks, one of which was eight feet long" (Labarthe p. 175). To go still further back we have Nyendaël speaking of tusks placed on men's heads cast in copper, and others placed on ivory pedestals.

on to the roads outside the town, where it was not long before they were devoured in the day-time by the vultures, which are not allowed to be killed, or at night by wild animals which abound in this country (p. 149). The women, who until then had remained purely passive spectators, took part in the fourth chant, which was more lively and animated than the preceding ones. They joined their voices to those of the men, of whom the most excited were drunk, quite as much by fanaticism as by bourdon wine or brandy, and who held each other tightly under the arms, beating time with their feet on the still reeking place where this abominable outrage had been committed. This ceremony completed, the animals were sacrificed by almost identical methods; but their flesh was distributed to the people after reserving what was necessary for the consumption of the minister. Finally, the festival was completed by the offerings which poor women presented;<sup>1</sup> they came one after

<sup>1</sup> "The less fortunate who have no spare slaves sacrifice animals according to their means. The poorest are allowed to join in the sacrifice of the king and the richer ones, and offer up coconuts and other fruits, palm wine, bourdon wine, liquor extracted from a sort of palm or brandy." (Beauvais p. 146.)

another to the foot of the altar, knelt down, and after several short prayers uttered in a low voice, they threw into the receptacle for offerings, pieces of coconut, yams, bananas and other fruit, which they watered with palm wine, bourdon wine and brandy." (pp. 145-150.)

A part of a fetish ceremony witnessed by Mr. C. Punch is thus described by him: "The people were ranged up leaving an open avenue up to the altar under the penthouse at the other end of the avenue, two of the king's boys held up a long bar of timber. I was taken up to the right-hand side to where the X is marked (Fig. 87), and found myself next to Ewagwe, whom I knew.

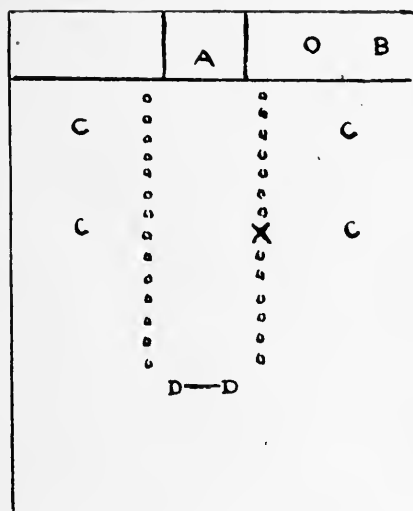


FIG. 87. — Sketch plan to illustrate the position of the individuals at a fetish ceremony when Mr. C. Punch was present.

- A. Altar
- O. King's position.
- B. Position of King's wives
- C. People standing round.
- D. Boys holding the bar.
- X. Position of Mr. C. Punch in the row of nobles.

ooo. Rows of nobles.

"The nobles were all wearing their coral necklaces such as one notes on the bronze heads, so these were not confined to the king. Probably there would be rules as to the number of strings of beads. They were not made of European coral, but of the country agate beads. The nobles were bare to the waist, save for a few strings of coral beads of no large size. Below the waist they wore very full petticoats; they were stuffed out by under-petticoats of stiff coarse baize of European make, but the top kilt was the country grass cloth, spotted all over with blood splashed on like holy water, I cannot say if human or otherwise. Sacrifices had been going on, but I cannot say if of animals or human beings. There were pools of either blood or water all over the compound, but I can vouch for the liberal supply of blood on the garments of the nobles. No man was allowed to wear clothes of silk except the king; it was safer to keep to the native grass cloths. Each noble had a weird head-dress, and held an *ebere* in his hand which he kept twisting round. At last the king and his wives came out and sat down. Tomtoms and horns made music, and dancing began. One or two of the nobles would step out and come up to the bar. Sometimes the bar would be dropped and they advanced nearer to the king. The dancing was simply posturing, twisting the *ebere*, and sometimes pointing it to the ground in the king's direction. At others it was passed to the left hand, the right fist being held up towards the king in salutation, the fingers being opened and shut several times. At times the king would tread a dignified measure for the true delight of his people, and I think for the special admiration of the white-faced stranger. Anyhow he asked me afterwards if I admired his dancing, which I naturally did."

Fawckner "saw a man who had given himself as a sacrifice to the fetish. A procession was formed, in all the splendour peculiar to those occasions, and the man was conducted amid a vast concourse of people to the river. Here according to the usual custom, they affix weights to the devotee's body, make him drunk, and sink him in the tide. As some sort of compensation, however, to the poor fellow, he was allowed for some time previous to his being offered up, the privilege of going into the market whenever he felt inclined, and helping himself to whatever he fancied. I often saw him enter the market, but directly the women espied him coming, they invariably caught up their baskets and ran away" (p. 103).

Mr. Punch knew a woman at Guato accused of being a malignant witch. "I knew she was in trouble about the matter, but nothing seemed to be done to her. One afternoon I heard business proceeding in the malaku house, and Brazilli, the interpreter, told me that the king had sent word she was to be tried by various ordeals again, but not by the saucewood. I went out to enquire into the matter, and found the woman and king's boys coming out of the malaku house. She looked rather dazed but said nothing; two of the Guatun men were carrying very old delapidated mats with a weird collection of fetishes, bits of wood gnarled and knotted into queer shapes, fowl feathers, old bones, and other rubbish of the sort. The Ahuraku said they were doing some business but did not say what it was. Brazilli told me he was sure they were going to kill the woman, as she had asked him for some rum to drink. I stopped the Ahuraku in the woman's presence and asked what it was all about, and if any harm were intended to the woman. He replied quite naturally, 'Oh no, the king had sent to say that she was a bad woman and must be sent away from Guatun, and that they were sending her to Iguahami.' The woman said nothing, in fact she seemed to smile, and as it was well known that I could and would protect anyone appealing to me, I thought it was as he said. Presently two of the Guatun men came carrying mats and bottles of rum, much as they usually did when going on a journey. They went into the bush, and the woman went off freely and unconcernedly with them. Later on Brazilli came in and told me that they had killed her; they took her to the waterside and then gave her rum to drink, after which she drank as much water from the stream as she could, and lay down in it, the boys holding her down. However she did not die quickly enough so they knocked her over the head with a club. I was told that those to be killed had rum given them if they wished it, but often refused it.

"On another occasion I heard most fearful screams from the Ahuraku's house. A woman was accused of being a witch and denied it. They wished to make her confess, or at any rate prove her innocence by endurance of torture. She was sat down near a big log and her hand placed on it, an iron staple was then put over the wrist and driven into the wood. With ordinary prisoners, the staple would be driven in only far enough to hold them, but in cases of torture it was driven in till the torture was, of course, fiendish. The only way of getting the unfortunate woman out was by splitting the log, which, of course, was very soon done.

"A curious superstition was that the millepede was too unclean for any man to touch. No one would by choice touch such an insect, but it was a strict law that when a millepede entered the king's quarters, it must be removed alive on a stick. If anyone forget himself and took the millipede in his hand or touched it, that person was killed."

It was contrary to Bini fetish to go on the water.

## CHAPTER VII

### PUNISHMENTS AND ORDEALS

Difference made between poor and powerful—Suicide to order—Nobles arraigned before their peers—Native police—Judgement compound—*Lex talionis*—Punishment for divulging state secrets (86)—Punishment for theft from strangers—Method of execution—Theft—Robbery against officials—Murder—Punishment for murder without bloodshed—Other crimes—Five ordeals: Piercing the tongue—Piercing clod of earth (87)—Spurting juice into eyes—Stroking tongue with hot copper—Long juju—Disposal of fines—Fire ordeal—Another form of ordeal by piercing the tongue (88)—Saucewood ordeal—Honesty of the ordeal—Fawckner's fate hangs on the throw of cowries—Landolphe's fetish discovers a thief.

IN a superstitious community like that of Benin punishment is naturally apt to be administered very capriciously, with one law for the poor and another for the rich and powerful; we have seen that while a captive poor man has no chance of being saved, the rich man can find a substitute, and we have seen that those who are rich and not powerful are obliged to hide the fact of their being rich. Nevertheless Roupell's officials tell us "If any freeman or chief did very bad, king could send for him and tell him to go home and kill himself, then palaver settle, or if he would not, then king could send men and cut his head off at night."

D. R. says of the Bini that they will not take "the least thing from a stranger, for that is punished very severely by capital punishment, for they very quickly punish and with his life, and kill him who in the least lays hold of a stranger; and they have a special method of execution, for first of all they bind the offender's arms behind his back, then they blindfold his eyes, one of the judges then comes and lifts up his arms above him so that his head hangs down almost to the ground, which the jailer or executioner then catches hold of and cuts off with an axe; the body is then quartered and cast to the birds to devour, which they abhor and fear very much."

According to Landolphe, "a member of the nobility accused of any offence or crime is arraigned before the Council of Big Men who convict him on the spot, by plurality of votes, either to pay a fine or to death, if the latter to have his head cut off. The council is always called together by the sounding of a tabor beaten in all the streets of the town or village which was the scene of the offence or crime. There is no body of armed men to arrest all sorts of criminals, the natives themselves helping one another in this respect" (II., 62). Landolphe however appears to forget that he has already spoken of a native police. He continues, "The people are judged in any inhabited district. In the centre of a large place there is a vast building open on all sides, in which the old men assemble who are in charge of this important work. Everybody is at liberty to enter and the most profound silence [*sic*] reigns. The accused has the right to choose someone to defend him, and the accuser makes his own charge, but if he does not bring sufficient proof he undergoes the punishment which would have been meted out to the accused. The fine imposed is paid forthwith, being always less than the fortune of the condemned, but in the case of the

death penalty the *lex talionis* is strictly carried out, nor are the sons of the king exempt"<sup>1</sup> (II., p. 63).

Landolphe once saw a young man, convicted of divulging state secrets, fastened to the top of one of the high trees planted in the centre of the town, and exposed alive to the vultures, who tore out his eyes and destroyed other portions of his body. But neither he nor Beauvais was able to save the man, the negroes simply laughing at their efforts (II., p. 65). This seems to be the first record of crucifixion, and if correct shows that crucifixion had not always a sacrificial character.

"The crimes here committed," says Nyendael, "are punished in the following manner. Theft does not occur here very often, for the negroes here are not so thievish as at other places; however, when it happens, and the thief is caught, he is obliged to make restitution of the stolen goods, and besides, punished by a fine; but if he be poor, after restoring the stolen goods if he can, he is very well beaten instead of being fined. But if the robbery be committed against any official, it is punished with the death penalty. However, as I have already said, this crime so seldom occurs that examples are rarely heard of. If theft is seldom heard of here, of murder one hears still less. Whoever kills a man is punished with death; but if the murderer happens to be the king's son, or some other influential person, he is banished to the utmost borders of the king's territories, to which he is conducted under a strong guard; but as none of these banished persons are ever seen again, nor does any one ever hear of them again, the negroes take it for granted that their guard conducts them to the Elysian fields. If any person with his fist, or otherwise, unfortunately kills another, and the dead person did not bleed, and his death does not seem to have been due to violence, the slayer may purchase his life, by first respectably burying the dead creditably at his own cost, and afterwards producing a slave to suffer in his stead. This slave, doomed to an expiatory sacrifice, he is obliged to touch on his knees with his forehead as he is killed; after which he is obliged to pay a handsome sum to the great lords, and this performed, he obtains his freedom; and with this the friends of the deceased are obliged to rest satisfied. I have already informed you of the punishment for adultery.<sup>2</sup> Whatever other crimes are committed, they are atonable with money, and the fine is proportionate to the offence. He who has no money must satisfy the fine by corporal punishment; so that where effects are deficient, the body must make good the fine. In case of accusations which are not clearly proved, the accused is obliged to clear himself by ordeal, which is practised in five several ways, four of which are performed in the case of slight offences and civil causes, and the fifth in the case of very great and important causes, such as high treason, designs on the life of the king, and other bad crimes. This last ordeal is only allowed to be gone through by important persons, and then only too by the king's order.

"The first sort of ordeal is managed in the following manner: The accused is taken to the priest, who greases a cock's feather, and therewith pierces the tongue of the accused; if the feather passes easily through, it is a sign the man is innocent, and the wound made by the quill will soon close and heal up without any pain. But on the other hand, if he be guilty, the quill remains sticking in his tongue, and he is accordingly pronounced guilty."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At Warri a king's son having accidentally killed a man by a blow in the chest with a gaff, he was in turn accused, condemned and killed by a blow in the chest with a club. Landolphe.

<sup>2</sup> See Marriage, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> "Ordeal by fowl feather was practiced both in Benin and among the Jekries in our time, being only used for settlement of civil cases and where men were accused of adultery." C.P.



"The second ordeal is practised in the following manner: The priest takes an oblong clod of earth, into which he sticks seven or nine cock's quills, which the suspected person is obliged to draw out successively; if they come out easily it is a sign of innocence; but if not, the prisoner is convicted of the misdeeds alleged against him.

"The third proof is made by spurning a certain juice of green herbs into the eyes of the accused person; which, if it happen to do him no hurt, he is thought innocent; but if his eyes become thereby red and inflamed, he is obliged to pay the fine laid on him.

"For the fourth ordeal, the priest takes a red-hot copper arm-ring and strokes the prisoner three times over the tongue with it, and from his being hurt or not hurt thereby, they judge whether he be guilty or innocent.

"I have seen all these four ordeals; but all the accused were declared guilty, and not without reason; for it would be strange indeed if red-hot copper did not burn the tongue. The fifth and last ordeal, which is not gone through once in twenty years, I never saw, and consequently have it only on hearsay.

"If any person be accused of a very great crime, of which he is desirous to clear himself by ordeal, the king's leave being first asked and obtained, the accused is brought to a certain river, to which is ascribed the strange quality of wafting ashore without harm every innocent person plunged therein, though never so unskilled in the art of swimming; and on the other hand, to sink the guilty to the bottom, though ever such a good swimmer; by which means if he endeavour to help himself out, it would be in vain, and only render his death the more painful. They relate that the water, which beforehand was very calm, immediately upon a person on whom the guilt lies being thrown in, ruffles up and continues as turbulent as a whirlpool, till the accused has sunk out of sight to the bottom; when, as though perfectly satisfied, it returns to its former tranquility.<sup>1</sup>

"The fines levied for these misdeeds are divided as follows:—First, the person injured by the theft, or any other crime, is satisfied out of it; then the governor has his part; and last of all the before mentioned great lords have also their share. As for the king, whose ear it never reaches, he has no part thereof. If the three lords are contented with what is sent them, it is well; but they frequently send their part back to the governors or viceroys, and in the king's name inform them, that the fines are too small, and consequently that they have not deported themselves in that affair according to their duty; giving them also to understand what they ought to have done. Those to whom these orders are sent, though they very well know that the king never meddles in these affairs, but that it is only the order of the lords, are bound to strict obedience, and generally send in addition as much as is asked, lest the lords should play them some trick sooner or later."

At Gwato, Fawckner met with two forms of ordeal, a fire ordeal and a cock's feather ordeal as above. He says: "The natives have a curious way of finding out a thief by a kind of fiery ordeal. It is as follows: A fire being lighted in front of the fetish house, they place an earthen pot on it, filled with some combustibles, which blaze like wild-fire, and at the bottom of this a small cowry is placed. All the inhabitants are convened around this fire, and the master of each family, surrounded

<sup>1</sup> "Nyendael is apparently wrong here, as he is describing the long juju of the Aro country. The Jekri knew it and would send people to undergo it; it may also have been heard of in Benin, but I think it quite improbable the Bini would have used the fetish of a country so far away as Aro. In fetish matters the king claimed to give his fetish to all the tribes round, including Dahomey." C.P.

by his household, all of whom place their hands on his back, at once proceeds to take the shell out of the burning pot. If he manages to get it out without burning his fingers, he is at once declared innocent; but, on the contrary, if he fail, he and all his family are immediately pronounced guilty, and each individual member is obliged to go through the ordeal. Whoever in attempting to take out the shell, therefore, burns his fingers is immediately declared to be the thief, and punished accordingly. Another mode, equally singular, is occasionally resorted to. The persons suspected are made to kneel down on the ground, and each one puts out his tongue. The fetish man immediately covers it with a certain mixture, and places over the surface a small leaf. He then takes a feather, and endeavours to push the quill part through the tongue; if he succeed, and can draw the whole of the feather clean through, the party operated upon is at once declared innocent; but should he fail in the first attempt to push the feather through, the poor creature at once suffers the extreme penalty of the law. This is a shocking and most revolting spectacle for an Englishman to witness, which I never could look on without feelings of horror and disgust; although the natives assured me it was not much pain, and the wound soon healed. They put great faith in this last mentioned trial, and often cause the thief to walk about the town as an example whilst the wound is unhealed" (pp. 103-5).

"At Guatun (Gwato) once there was a trial by 'saucewood,'" writes Mr. Punch. "Three Jekri people accused of witchcraft came to Guatun to prove their innocence. They came of their own free will, and sent presents to the king asking him to send his messengers with the 'saucewood.' A day was appointed sometime ahead and the accused remained in their canoes, on good terms with the Guatun people, and apparently light-hearted and free from anxiety. I thought the matter was a breach of the king's promise to me that no horrors should take place in Guatun, and remonstrated. He said he was sorry, but the people came of their own free will, and Guatun was one of the places on the riverside devoted to the practice, so that he could not refuse. I said in that case I should leave the place until it was over, and did so. Other Europeans stayed in the village and saw the whole ordeal. There were two women and one man. They made ceremonies, and for a day before the trial touched no palm oil, which is a daily article of food, as the poison was said to be more fatal if any palm oil had been eaten.

"On the morning, the king's messengers arrived with the saucewood, or bark of *Erythrophlaeum guineense*. The Guatun people formed a passage, at one end of which were the king's messengers, and at the other end the accused kneeling, and each holding in his or her hand an egg. The bark was beaten in a mortar with water till it formed a paste, and was then made into three egg-shaped balls. The chief messenger then told the accused they were to swallow the ball, and if innocent it would be returned and they would be safe, if guilty they would die. The ball was then put into the empty hand and conveyed to the mouth. One woman seemed unable to swallow hers, and the people helped her by pulling her back hair. As soon as the poison was swallowed, they were allowed to use any means to produce vomiting, drinking mud and water. The fowl's egg in the other hand was repeatedly passed up the stomach to the throat. It was supposed to exercise an influence on the poison and bring it out. The accused vomited, and the messengers examined the vomit, declaring at once if the evil thing had come out. The man was unhurt, one woman threw up her arms and shrieked almost at once, and died instantly. The other woman vomited, but the evil thing did not come up, and the messengers said she was guilty and she would die, which she did in the evening, rolling over into a

fire near which she was sitting. The bodies were thrown out into the bush, and were said to be very long in decaying.<sup>1</sup>

"I do not think as a rule the administrators of the ordeal in Benin took bribes. As a fact, the parties undergoing the ordeal send large presents before the king sends down the poison. Of course some people say it was arranged beforehand if the dose was to be fatal, but my opinion is that as a rule the results would be left to the effect of the poison on different constitutions."

On their way to Benin, the fate of Fawckner and his friends depended on the fall of the dice, or pitch and toss. "The fetish man produced some cowries, or negroes' teeth as they are sometimes called, a small shell imported from the East Indies. The flat side is white, and convex red. These shells were to decide our fate in the following manner: They were to be thrown up into the air by this man, and on the turn of them our lives depended" (p. 50).

Landolphe having been robbed of some fifty coral necklaces, warned his servants that if the guilty one on being interrogated did not acknowledge the theft, his [Landolphe's] fetish would burn his [the culprit's] beard. His fetish consisted in phosphor matches, which, when the tubes holding them were broken, became ignited; so calling up the negro he considered guilty, Landolphe caused the match to ignite and singe the man's beard. All the negroes fell frightened at his feet, promising to replace the coral and to thief no further if only his fetish would spare them (II., p. 68).

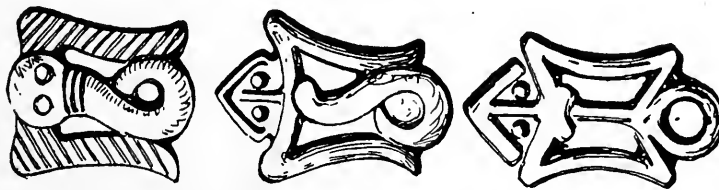


FIG. 88.—Various forms of Catfish Ornamentation,  
From Bronzes in British Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Yet a different sort of ordeal is described by Burton (p. 156) at Warri. "Two kinds of bark are used, that of the young and that of the old tree, the latter not being too virulent. A quantity sufficient is beaten up with water, which is strained off after standing half-an-hour; at the end of that time a quid of the fibre and a palmful of the juice are administered to the accused. If he return it he is innocent, if not, he is condemned; guilt thus depends not upon the brains of a jury, but upon the strength of the stomach pure and simple. The idea here, as in other parts of Africa, is that the drug acts as an intelligent agent, which searches out and finds man's mortal sin. It is remarked that, as a rule, rich men escape where poor men die; moreover that when a man has vomited, the priest administers a restorative which removes all traces of the operation. Perhaps it is fair to suspect that their reverences have some imitation of the bark which deceives the vulgar." According to the description given by Merolla (Churchill, I., pp. 613-15) it appears that the ordeals on the Congo are of a similar nature to those followed in Benin.

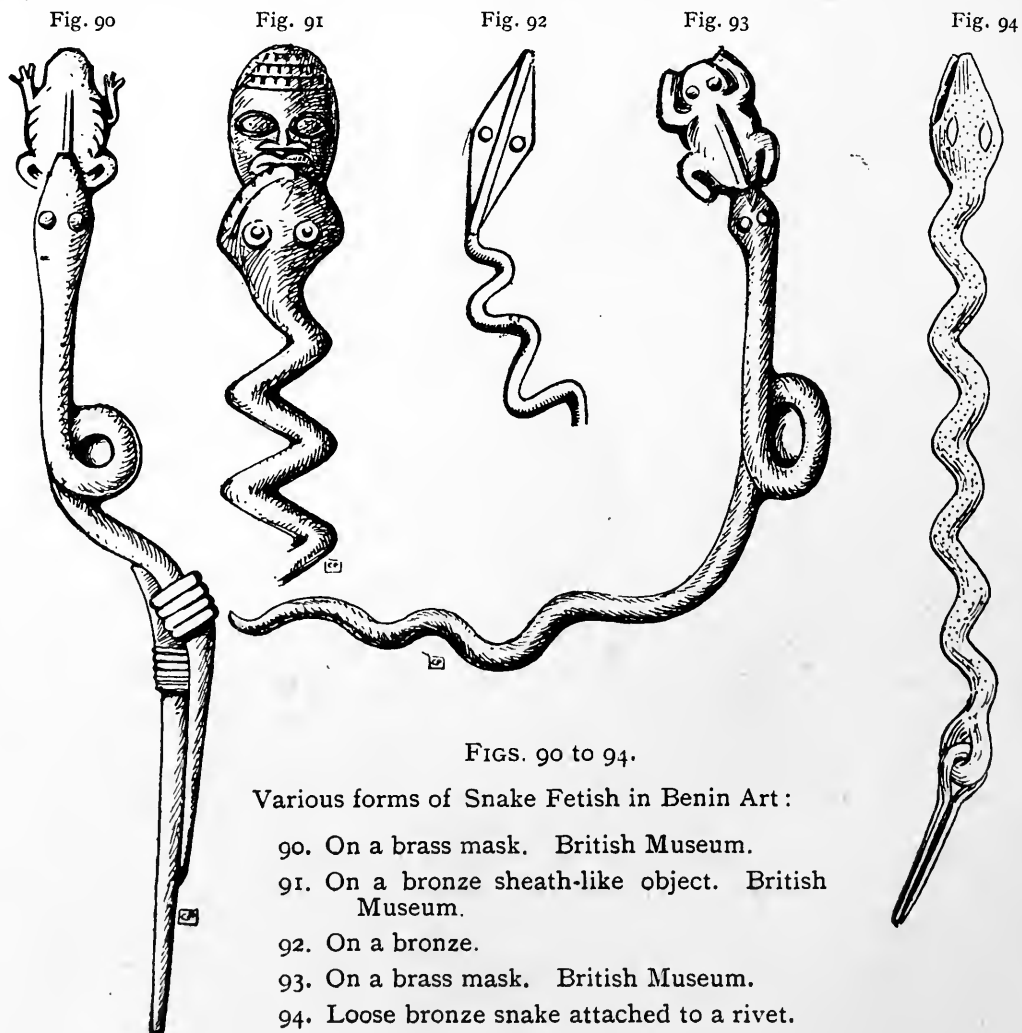
At Old Calabar, Hutchinson describes eight forms of ordeal (Impressions, Lond., 1858, pp. 156-159).

As I go to press, Mr. C. Punch sends me the following note (fig. 89) on a Benin River Water Spirit:



FIG. 89.

"All the part of Benin River in above sketch was haunted by a water spirit in the shape of a huge alligator, with a light in his head. The light would be seen at night by people in canoes and moored in the river, and offerings would thereupon be put into the water for the spirit lest it should come and break the canoe." This spirit is, therefore, that of Alagwe as recorded above by Roupell (p. 53), which destroys canoes, or it is another form of the same spirit.



FIGS. 90 to 94.

Various forms of Snake Fetish in Benin Art:

- 90. On a brass mask. British Museum.
- 91. On a bronze sheath-like object. British Museum.
- 92. On a bronze.
- 93. On a brass mask. British Museum.
- 94. Loose bronze snake attached to a rivet.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GOVERNMENT

Dapper's account—King's unlimited authority—Three high functionaries—Field Marshall (Captain of War)—Government of towns and villages—Corruption—Nyendaël's account (92)—King's absolute power—Three great lords—Knowledge withheld from the king—Difficulty of obtaining audience with the king—Nominal authority of the king—The Members of the Council (93)—Their coral—Their functions—Official's limit of freedom—The officials in Mr. Punch's time (94)—Bestowal of coral (95)—Loss of coral punished by death—Examples—Coral a royal gift—Coral a patent of nobility—Delight of a recipient of the coral—The King's mark—Royal messengers—King's revenue (96).

ACCORDING to Dapper "the King of Benin governs with an unlimited authority, and calls all his subjects slaves, however great nobles they may be. No children are acknowledged as his slaves till they are shewn to the king by their father or their mother; the king then orders them to be marked with a proper incision, then the children become slaves to the king like all the others; for all his people, high and low, are bound to acknowledge themselves to be slaves to the king. There are among others three highest state counsellors in Great Benin appointed by the king for the government of the country. These are called by the Portuguese *Fiadors*. They are the highest personages in the country next to the king, for above them there is nobody but the field marshall, who is nearest to the king, and the king's mother. They are in command of a quarter of the town, and draw great profits from this; their official titles are *Ongogue*, *Ossade*, and *Arribo*.<sup>1</sup> So too, every town or village is governed by a certain number of chiefs or nobles, called *Fiadors*, who settle all questions other than those relating to corporal punishment, fining the accused according to the seriousness of the trespass; but all the criminal affairs are referred to Great Benin, where the higher court is settled and sits every day. But the judges are often bribed by giving them cowries without the king's knowledge, although with the connivance of the greatest *Fiadors*. The village of Gotton (Gwato) is governed by five, and the village of Arbon<sup>2</sup> by seven noblemen."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ongogue is probably Ewagwe; Ossade is obviously Ushadde or Uchudi, sometimes called Usudi; Arribo is still the same as in my time." C.P.

<sup>2</sup> Arbon was on the Lubo or Olugbo creek and hence is probably identical with Uruegi, one of the two entry towns to Benin for Europeans, Gwato (Egutan, Guatun, Gotton, &c.) being the other.

<sup>3</sup> "At Warri the king usually has three great noblemen as his counsellors, who are in possession of certain parts of the country, over which they rule in the king's name, without anyone daring to hinder them. The king who reigned in the year sixteen hundred and forty, was a mulatto, called by the Portuguese and other Europeans Dom Antonio de Mingo. His father, de Mingo, had married a Portuguese girl, whom he had brought from Portugal, where he had personally been staying, and by whom he had got a son. He is dressed like a Portuguese, always wearing a sword or dagger by his side like other mulattoes." (Dapper.)

Nyendaël's account differs somewhat from the above. He says: "I have often observed here three states, besides the king, who governs absolutely, his will being a law and bridle to his subjects, which none of them dare oppose. Next to him, the first and highest state is composed of three persons, called here Great Lords, or Big Men, who are always near the king's person; and any person that wants to apply to his majesty, is obliged to address himself first to them, and they undertake to acquaint him with the request and return his answer. But they are sure to inform him only of what pleases themselves, and consequently in the king's name they act as they think fit; so that in reality the whole government depends solely on them; which may the more easily happen, because, except a few, no persons are admitted into the king's presence, much less allowed to speak to him.<sup>1</sup> The second state or rank is composed of those who are here called *Are de Roe*, or street-kings;<sup>2</sup> some of whom preside over the commonalty, and others over the slaves; some over military affairs, others over the affairs relating to cattle and the fruits of the earth, etc. And indeed, there is a particular supervision for everything that can be thought of. Out of the number of these *Are de Roes* are chosen the viceroys and governors of the countries which are subject to the king. These are all under the command of, and responsible to, the three great men on all occasions." Elsewhere he observes: "The government of this country is principally vested in the king and the three above-mentioned great lords; the first is nominal governor, and the last are really so. Each province has its particular governor, all of whom depend on the three great sources, [i.e. lords,] without whose consent they dare not act."

From both of the above accounts it is clear that as knowledge of what was going on was kept from the king, there must have been chiefs who acted independently of their sovereign. That the chiefs did not at times so much as attempt to carry out the king's wishes came out very clearly at the king's trial, where it was proved that some of the chiefs acted directly contrary to his wishes. Lieut. King seems to have understood "that the meanest subject who has a complaint to make has the right to address the king personally," but he must have been misinformed, as the obstacles placed in the way of seeing the king was one of the special features of Benin. "The king himself did not like it, because by this means the nobles learnt beforehand all that was being said to the king. Especially did these nobles keep a zealous watch on the presents sent him. He appointed one of his boys to receive any messenger and conduct him into his presence at once, but the nobles managed nearly always to get hold of the messenger and detain him. It was the same with a European—he had so many nobles to see that he was exhausted with delays before he could get to the king, who complained that 'his eye was not allowed to catch ground.' Nevertheless, he was by no means a nonentity. The king could and did do as he pleased, subject to the drawback that he could not leave his quarters, and consequently his orders were not carried out." (C. Punch). But even so far back as in Landolphe's time a case occurred tending to show that the power of the king was

<sup>1</sup> Landolphe mentions casually that the Europeans who brought any complaint before the king were afraid of their heads (II., p. 93).

<sup>2</sup> "Street kings. This reminds me much of the Iyalode in Yoruba towns, commonly called head market women, but, perhaps, more correctly translated by the words 'Mother of Streets.' (Ode=outside of a house or town)." C.P.



limited.<sup>1</sup> In the year 1786 the French were anxious to have a fort built at Gwato, but the reply of the king was to the effect that he must consult his Council about it. This is in fact the first mention of the Benin Council. Landolphe writes: "The council consisted of sixty 'big men,' who wore round the neck, on the wrists and on the ankles their double strings of coral (II., p. 95). Four *fiadors* conducted us to the council chamber, which was at least sixty feet long, and at the other end we saw the king in an arm-chair raised three steps up. He was dressed in a very fine white *pagne*; two negroes, about twenty years of age, and quite naked, stood at his side, carrying a *damas* in the right hand, point upwards. Sixty old men about seventy years of age, known as the 'big men,' dressed in superb *pagnes* surrounded their master. Every one of them wore on his neck, ankles and wrists two rows of very large coral, which is the distinctive mark of the highest office of the state. The *fiadors* and *passadors* are only allowed to wear a single row on any part of their body, or rather a necklace, and they must besides have the king's authority to do so, as the dignity is not hereditary.<sup>2</sup> The above number of old men is divided into three sections; twenty of them have charge of the receipts and expenses, and are called the council of the finance minister; twenty others make up the council of the minister for war, and occupy themselves with all that concerns peace and war; and the last twenty have the control of trade" (I., p. 113). The functions of these councillors appear to be analogous to those of the street-lords, above described by Nyendaël.

Landolphe gives a different version from those of Dapper and Nyendaël of the duties of the state functionaries. He says there are three classes<sup>3</sup> of nobility in Benin. "These classes consist of the *big men*, the *fiadors*, and the third class, the *passadors*, of which at Owhere there are none. The big men may not leave the capital, and the *fiadors* the kingdom, under pain of death. The *passadors* never leave the kingdom except with special instructions; they carry the messages which the king sends anywhere; they promulgate the bye-laws and regulations of the police [*sic*]; they carry royal messages to foreign nations and receive the ambassadors who come to Benin; they proclaim the declarations of war and treaties of peace" (II., p. 61). On the other hand, Beauvais, the contemporary of Landolphe, says there are four degrees of nobility, called *fiadors*, decorated with a coral necklace of one or more branches [strings] (p. 144), but he gives no particulars of their respective functions.

<sup>1</sup> In this respect the king was probably much in the same position of puppet as has been found to be the case elsewhere in West Africa. For instance, a former resident in Onitsha writes me: "The King of Onitsha is a nonentity in so far as power is concerned, as the chiefs are the real rulers. There are three grades of chiefs, with many chiefs in each grade, who all help in the government, Chieftainship is not hereditary in any way; anyone who can afford the cost can become a chief, taking one step at a time. Each grade is gained by purchase; a large feast is held by the chiefs, and a sum of money, or perhaps more correctly speaking the goods in kind, being the novices or staggers payment, is divided amongst the company. There appears to be no indication of secret societyship about the grades. The Government occupies itself with trials, war palavers, land palavers, etc." In 1889, Sir Claude Macdonald found that the Onitsha King was only in name a ruler, that several of his subordinate chiefs were not on speaking terms with him, and that his smallest actions were dependent on the will of his people." (Mockler-Ferryman, p. 24).

<sup>2</sup> See Burial, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> At Warri there were only two classes of nobility. "The *fiadors* of Owhere when authorised to do so by the king, have the right to cross the limits of the empire [*sic*]; they also fulfil the same functions as the *passadors* of Benin" (Landolphe II., p. 61).

From Mr. C. Punch I have received the following notes on the individuals who helped to misgovern the country :

“ Besides the governors who were put over the white man’s trade there were the king’s boys, *Ukoba*. These were probably the fighting class of the Dutch chronicler. They were unclothed save for a brass anklet and a necklace of agate, until such time as the king gave them a wife and allowed them to wear a cloth. Though called boys, many were men over forty. They terrorised the country. Some were confined



FIG. 95.—Bronze Plaque, British Museum. The two outside figures represent the Ukoba or King’s boys.

to the king’s compounds in Benin itself. Others were allowed to go about the country on so-called king’s messages. They arrived at a village, and called the head man or men and said ‘Eguatuwo,’ which meant the ‘king sends you his compliments,’ but it was a form which was a terror to the villagers. Anyone known to be well-to-do was called, and reminded of some trouble which had arisen in the past between some of his forbears, and one of the king’s predecessors. He was told that the king wished to see him in Benin about it. After much begging and many presents, the Ukoba would consent to go back to Benin and intercede. Another favourite way of extorting money was for a king’s boy to take a sickly goat or sheep to a village, and tell the head man that the king asked him kindly to take care of the goat. If the head man did so the animal probably died, and then of course its death was an excellent ‘palaver’ to hold over that village *in perpetuo*. The Ukoba were also the king’s executioners. If it was decided to get rid of a person in Benin, he was asked to attend the king’s reception, and when the man attended, the king picked a quarrel with him and left the place with an angry word, whereupon the Ukoba fell on the victim and slaughtered him before he left the place. As a rule, people so summoned ran away to the bush villages, and got one of the Benin nobles to intercede for them.

“The population of Benin town consisted mostly of nobles of whom there were herds.<sup>1</sup> They were known by their titles, not by their names.

“The Ollubusheri was very high in rank. I did not see the holder of the office, and was told at the time that he was a boy and had not assumed his title; but I was misinformed, as later events proved there was an Ollubusheri. He was chief of the fighting men—what the Dutch and French spoke of as the War Captain.

“The Ojomo came next to the king, and was perhaps, in a sense equal, for he was in one sense an independent king, and lived at his own town. He was allowed to carry an umbrella. On one occasion I left the town in a rage, and it was Ojomo who ran after me and begged me to go back, lest there should be a regular massacre among the obstructive party. He put up his umbrella to show what a very big man he was, but I noticed he put it down again before we got near the king’s compounds.

“There were many others, though I cannot remember all of them, but the following were some of the titles: Obaradesagmo, of the royal line; Obamoe, Aboynagbo, Obaseke—in fact most of the titles began with Oba—King.

<sup>1</sup> Dapper, it will be remembered, spoke of the large number of nobles.

"The Okerison was the official who killed the human beings at the big ceremonies, and the Okerison imala, i.e., he who kills the animals. Orukatu, was the king's brother, and an elder one at that by a few hours. As to the Arribo and the Ewagwe, in old days they were stationed at Guatun to carry the news when a European arrived. Ewagwe was premier, but on one occasion the Arribo by a trick outran the Ewagwe, and had the privilege given him of always being the one to receive a European stranger, and naturally expected to get first feathers" (C. Punch).

Nyendael relates that on one day in the year the king makes a parade through the city, when "he grants many appointments to the government of towns and villages." He relates that the honourable posts were given to the officials on the recommendation of the three great lords; and the king as "a sign of this honour presents each of them with a string of coral, that being equivalent to the arms of an order of knighthood. This string they are obliged to wear about their necks, without ever daring to put it off on any account whatever; for if they are so unhappy as to lose it, or carelessly suffer it to be stolen, they are *ipso facto* irretrievably condemned to die. For the confirmation of which, I can give you two instances, to one of which I was witness, viz: a negro who through inadvertency had suffered this chain to be stolen from him, and was executed without delay; as was also the other negro who acknowledged himself guilty of the said theft, besides three more who were privy to it, and did not inform about it. Thus five men were put to death for a chain of coral, that was intrinsically not worth twopence. The second instance happened about the year 1700, and was somewhat more extraordinary. At that time there lay near me, off the village of Boededoe, two Portuguese ships or barques, one of which departed before us; but the other was obliged to stay a month or two after me, in order to collect her debts; which coming in very slowly the captain resolved to cause a fiador, who was his greatest debtor, to be arrested in his ship; but when this was attempted, the debtor resisted and endeavoured to escape; but during the scuffle with the sailors, the pilot caught hold of his chain of coral, broke it in pieces, and threw it overboard, which so dispirited the fiador, that he let go his hold, and surrendered himself immediately. But some time after, finding the pilot asleep, and having gotten a blunderbuss, he shot him through the head, and thus obliged him to exchange his natural for a more lasting sleep; with this the negro was not yet satisfied, but afterwards wounded the dead body in several places, and then threw away his knife, adding that he had now taken his revenge, and that it was perfectly indifferent to him what they did with him. 'For,' continues he, 'when my coral was thrown overboard, I was a dead man, and at present I am in the same condition.' The Portuguese did not venture to punish him, but delivered him to the governor of the place, who dispatched him to the king, and the barque departing, his majesty committed him to close prison in order to punish him very severely in the presence of the next Portuguese who should come thither. This very year I saw the negro, and just upon my departure, two Portuguese ships came with orders to demand justice for their murdered pilot. How they succeeded I cannot say, because I left that place immediately after; but that it cost the negro his life is undeniable. The king keeps these corals in his own possession; and the counterfeiting, or possessing them without his grant is punished with death. Besides the fiadors, under the same rank are also reckoned the *mercadores* or merchants; *fulladors* or intercessors; the *veilles* or elders; all of them are distinguished by the above mentioned mark of honour, viz: the wearing of coral."

According to Lieut. King, "A coral necklace is the distinctive mark of royalty and nobility, and when the king confers a patent of nobility on anyone, he puts the

necklace on him with his own hands." On one occasion Fawckner noticed a messenger approaching him and "performing the most extraordinary gesticulations. At first I thought him mad, for he danced and capered through the street, followed by a great many persons who seemed to partake in the same feeling of joy or madness. He exhibited first one leg and then the other alternately, extended his hands, and then pointed to a string of coral which encircled his ankles and wrists. The fact was, the king had made a 'gentleman' of him, having bestowed an honour similar to our knighthood, and placed the insignia of his order, the coral, round his legs and arms. He was anxious that everybody should see it, and displayed all the vanity and pride of a child when he is first breeched" (p. 89). Truly coral played an important part at the Court of Benin, and we cannot wonder that in time it got a juju of its own.

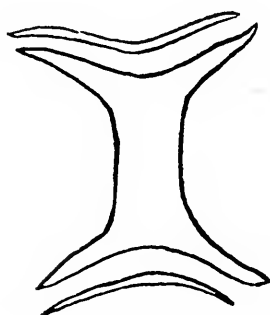


FIG. 96.—The King's Mark. From rubbing, off a tusk in the possession of Dr. F. N. Roth. Height over all  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. (3.2 c.m.) Anyone in possession of a tusk with the King's mark on was liable to be run in.

"The king has a very good income, for his territories are very large and full of governors, and each one knows how many bags of boesjes [cowries], the money of this country, he must raise annually for the king, which amount to a vast sum, which it is impossible for me to estimate. Others, of a lower rank than the former, instead of money, deliver to the king cattle, sheep, fowls, yams and cloths, in short, whatever he wants for his house-keeping; so that he is not put to one farthing expense on that account, and consequently he lays up his whole pecuniary revenue untouched. Duties or tolls on imported and exported wares are not paid here; but everyone pays a certain sum annually to the governor of the place where he lives, for the liberty of trading; he sends part of it to the king, hence the king can estimate what he has to expect annually without much variation" (Nyendaël). From the same authority we learn that fines exacted as punishment never reach the king.

Gallwey also tells us, "When an elephant is killed, the king claims one tusk, the other going to the hunter; but the king has the option of buying it if he wishes to (p. 128).

The taxes levied on European merchants mentioned by Nyendaël (*see Trade*), and the gifts of captains of vessels and other visitors as mentioned by Adams, would help to swell the king's revenues.<sup>1</sup>

"The quickness with which news was conveyed to the king was startling. The natives of course said it was his magic, but I fancy they must have had some system of stages of runners who passed on news which it was thought likely would interest the king. Although difficult of access to those seeking audience on their own account, anyone at all who had news went direct to the king and asked leave to tell him. If pleased the king would reward him, but he also risked incurring punishment, even death, if the king did not think his news worth having. In this way every inducement was given to get news to Benin. I thought it was done to establish the king's reputation for omniscience." (C. Punch).

<sup>1</sup> The King of Onitsha lives by the fees obtained in adjudicating upon disputes, also upon the yam offerings made to him once a year, and the offerings of fishes made him at various times. On certain days he has the power of seizing goods on certain roads from passers-by.

## CHAPTER IX

### INHERITANCE

Husband claims all—On death of husband king claims all—Eldest son made heir—Disposal of the wives—Slaves presented to king and lords as heriots—Allowance to younger brother and mother—Some wives taken, others set to work—Some become courtezans—If no issue inheritance goes to brothers—Failing all heirs the king inherits—Inheritance of the crown (98)—Choice of crown-prince kept secret—Curious method of proclaiming crown-prince—Destinction of king's brother—Landolphe's version of election of crown-prince (99)—Eldest son rarely chosen—Elected prince visits king once a year—Not allowed to stay in the city—Lieut. King states eldest son always chosen (100)—Choice hidden from him—Roupell's officials confirm Lieut. King—Son trained up as king, but not allowed to remain in city—How Jambra came to the throne—How Overami the last king came to the throne—Curious that eldest son chosen as king (101)—The king's understudy—Sacrifices—The pits (102)—A new compound for the dead king.

“As to inheritances, they follow this rule. The husband takes all the property which his wife has left, for himself, without leaving to the children anything but what their mother has given them during her lifetime. While the wife, on the contrary, when her husband dies, is not allowed to touch anything of his goods ; all these, as well as slaves and other possessions, go over into the king's hands. And, if there are sons, the king often makes the eldest heir of all his father's slaves and goods, also sometimes of virgin wives, the others being given in marriage to other men ” (Dapper).

Nyendaël tells us the same, with a little more detail, thus: “The right of inheritance devolves in the following manner. When any person of condition dies, the eldest son is sole heir, but is obliged to present a slave by way of heriot to the king, and another to the three great lords, with a petition that he may succeed to his father in the same position, which the king accordingly grants, and he is declared the lawful heir of all his father has left. He bestows no more on his younger brothers than what out of his bounty he pleases ; but if his mother be alive, he allows her a creditable maintenance proportionate to her condition, and allows her besides to keep whatever she has gotten from his father. His father's other widows, especially those who have not had any children, the son takes home if he likes them, and uses as his own ; but those whom he does not like, he also takes them home with their children and sets them to work, in order to support them the more creditably ; but entertains no matrimonial connection with them. With his connivance they are allowed to earn a little money so as honourably to keep themselves. Of this last sort, there are as great numbers of accommodating women as in other countries. If the deceased leaves no children, the brother inherits his effects, and in case of absence of such heir, the next of kin inherits. But if no lawful heir can be found, the king inherits.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If Dapper and Nyendaël are correct, there was an absolute break in the customs of inheritance from any of the Yoruba tribes among whom inheritance is as follows:—Property is of three kinds (1) the dwelling house, (2) the farm land, (3) personal property such as money (cowries), goods and

The inheritance to the crown evidently followed similar lines. Dapper says: "The crown is inherited by the sons, and if there are no sons, by the brothers. When the king is *in extremis* and leaves sons, as is usually the case, on account of the many wives, he orders one of his noblemen, called Onegwa, to be sent for, to whom he divulges the name of the heir to the crown; this nobleman not being allowed to reveal it to anyone else, till the king has been dead for a considerable space of time.<sup>2</sup> But immediately after the king's death, this nobleman assumes the superintendence of the king's possessions, and the deceased king's children then come and kneel down before him and salute him; although nobody knows as yet who will inherit the crown. Everybody then offers this Onegwa many goods and valuables, in order to compete for the royal dignity; although the Onegwa is not allowed to tell anybody the secret. Then, when the proper time has arrived, he orders the Owe-Asserry or Seasayre, being the field-marshal,<sup>3</sup> the nearest to the king, to be called. He, on arrival, asks the Onegwa what he has to say, whereupon the Onegwa tells him who has been appointed successor to the crown by the deceased king. Then the Owe-Asserry or Seasayre asks four or five times, whether the late king has ordained it so, which the Onegwa acknowledges by saying 'yes.' Thereupon the Seasayre goes home without saying a word. When this is done, the Onegwa orders the son appointed successor by his father to be called again, and then tells him to go to the Seasayre immediately, and offer him many goods, that he may quickly appoint the new king, whereupon the future king is ordered to go home. After five or six days the Seasayre betakes himself to the court again, and then calls the nobleman or Onegwa, whom he questions again, whether the king has said so. If he then answers this question with 'yes,' twice and three times, then the appointed heir to the crown is called, and ordered to kneel down, while the supreme power over the kingdom is explicitly conferred upon him; whereupon, he thanks them, then gets up, is dressed in the royal attire, and sits down again. Then all the vassals, from the Seasayre down to the lowest in rank, come to kneel down before the king and salute him. As soon as this solemnity is ended the king has to go to another village, called Osebu, to keep his court there, as his time for reigning in Benin has not yet come, when there is some sacrifice of men, or cattle, or horses, or cows, or anything else to the devil, in the honour of his deceased father; then he is smeared with the blood of the slaughtered cattle. When now the above-mentioned Seasayre thinks it fit time, and the king has been sufficiently taught the lessons of his forefathers, he is called by the said Seasayre to Benin, where he lives henceforth and keeps his court, ruling at will. The king, when in power, at once tries to do away with his brothers, in order to govern the more securely by not having com-

slaves. The dwelling house is family property and cannot be alienated, and all members of the family and their descendants have the right of entry and the use of the family house. Farm land is divided among the children the eldest taking the largest share, and in the event of the other members being young the eldest holds their share in trust working it for them. Personal property descends not to the children but to brothers or sisters, and brothers and sisters by the same mother inherit before those by the same father. Brother or sister so inheriting would have to provide for children if the latter were unable to provide for themselves, and would owe the children a share." C.P.

<sup>2</sup> In Dahomey the prime minister and his next in rank decide which of the king's sons is to succeed, generally the first born after the king's succession is chosen.

<sup>3</sup> Captain of War. "This is the same as the modern title *Yaceri*, whom I often heard called *Saseri*." C.P.



petitors for the crown; or he usually lets them live no longer than twenty or twenty-five years, for fear of plots with the friends of some killed or banished fiadors or state counsellors, as happened a few years ago, when the now ruling king had his brother strangled by ordering his people to hold a cloth over his mouth and nose, because he had tried to poison the king during his illness, with the assistance of some noblemen. He then, in the presence of them all, called all his brother's partisans, and told them he would order them to be killed, and then immediately proceeded to do so; they were all beheaded. Some say that the king compels his brothers to hang themselves, as nobody is allowed to touch royal blood with the intention to kill, but orders them to be buried with great honour and pomp."

Landolphe gives a different account of the election of a king. "As the monarch of the two empires, *i.e.*, Benin and Warri, advances in years, he is obliged to cause one of his children to be nominated sovereign at his death, as without this formality the crown might fall by election to someone not a member of his family.<sup>1</sup> He calls together all the big men, fiadors and passadors of the kingdom, who on a certain day of the month [*jour de lune*], have to assemble in one of the courts of the palace capable of holding 6000 men, and from which, on that day, the women are excluded. The king calls in his male children not less than twenty years old, and presenting them says: 'Here are my sons, choose from amongst them that one who is best qualified for the throne, so that after my death you may find in him the security for peace and the virtues of a good father, as well as the courage of a warrior when it is necessary to fight.' The choice rarely falls on the eldest son. Whoever is recognised as the heir to the throne takes at once the title of king of a province. The assembly rises, salutes him and addresses him through a chief, and he is led to his father who dubs him a knight. Then he goes to his province, which he may only leave once a year on the day of his election, in order to pay homage to the author of his being. I was once present at the arrival of the young king under the above circumstances. His name was Chiffau; he was good looking, five feet two inches high. He was escorted by about a thousand to twelve hundred men armed with assegais, and thirty young men, some in white cloths and others in red cloths, marched in front of him, dancing and beating time with tambourines. Having entered the court where the remains of his ancestors reposed, the king, his father, advanced towards him. The king's loins were covered with some magnificent cloths, and his neck, arms and ankles, were covered by a quantity of large strings of coral. On this occasion he wore a net shirt, of which each knot was furnished with a coral bead; it weighed more than twenty pounds, for the king made me test it. Having sat himself at the foot of the tomb of the late monarch, where we could see at least sixty elephant tusks, he called his son, kissed him, and both shed tears on each other before the assembly, which seemed to partake of their emotion. At the end of this ceremony the young king returned to his province accompanied by his armed suite. Being astonished that he did not go into the palace, I asked the reason why of the fiador Oyfo, one of the first confidants of the old king, who said: 'The big men never allow a king's son, heir to the throne, to speak to his father, for fear lest the latter might suggest feelings of hatred or vengeance against his own enemies, or that the son might be advised to change our customs, which we endeavour to keep free from all innovation since the origin of the dynasty' (II., pp. 58-60).

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Landolphe states that at Warri "the eldest son of the sister of the king succeeds on the death of the king, if the king has no children." (II., p. 6).

On the other hand, we are told by Lieut. King that "The eldest son of the King of Benin is looked upon as the heir to the throne. From his infancy he is sent to a town some distance off, in order to be initiated into the art of governing, and into the mysteries of religion by experienced old men, without the secret of his high birth being made known to him, which he does not learn until he is called to sovereign power by the death of his father, or until he has arrived at an age when he is no longer in need of instruction." The account given by Roupell's officials confirms Lieut. King's statement, viz.: "The eldest son always succeeded to the throne. When the heir was born a big play was held, then the king came out and showed his son to all men, then he was trained up to be king. The eldest son was never allowed inside the city till his father's death; he resided at Shelu, but sometimes he could come and pay his father a visit."

The manner in which Jambra came to the throne is recorded by Burton as follows: "Jambra is the second son of Oddi, or Odalla, the king of Benin in Belzoni's time, who was described by Messrs. Moffat & Smith as a robust old man, who affected much dignity, and would not allow them to approach near his person. His elder brother is Bawaku, whose birth not having been reported in due time by his mother, the cadet became, according to the law of the land, the senior.<sup>1</sup> When the old king died there was of course a fight. The chiefs and ministers preferred the milder and more easily managed man. Jambra therefore changed his name to Atolo, seized his father's property, and became Obba. Bawaku, whose temper is despotic, resisted for a time, but was presently expelled the country. He then fled towards the Niger and settled at Isan, a city said to be seven days' march from Benin and three from Igarra. Since 1854 the brothers have been constantly at war. Many of the Benin people, it is said, are now flying to the Pretender, who, if the ministers did not fear for their heads, would soon make himself Obba" (pp. 413-15).

Somewhat curiously similar to the occurrences related above by Burton, is the account of the coming to the throne of Overami, given me by Mr. C. Punch: "Two of the wives of Adola were enceinte at the same time, and were given in charge of nobles to be kept in villages till the children were born, and the nobles had to make all speed to inform the king on the child being born. Orukotu was born first but his guardian was slow in notifying the fact. Odobowa [the lately deposed king] was born later, but his guardian announced him first to King Adola, who recognised him as his heir. This was Benin law. I was told in Benin that a similar instance led to the foundation of Warri. The younger was first declared king. The elder when he grew up, though the brothers were friends, saw that they could not live in the same place, so emigrated to Warri, and established another kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

"Orukotu tried to oust Adubowa and had a large following on Adola's death, but Adubowa was proclaimed king and proceeded to perform the rites. Orukotu's party made head; I was told the Ojomo, the Ewagwe and Obaradesagmo were mixed up with it.

"The Ukoba, the chief eunuch who had charge of the king's wives, headed by Aguramasi and Agbe, king's boys, stood by Adubowa, and he finally became king

<sup>1</sup> "In England, an annuity office prefers considering the date of christening to the date of birth, in Africa the age dates from the day when the king acknowledges the child. Both are equally absurd"—R.B. In France also the date of christening was formerly the date to record.

<sup>2</sup> The Warri branch was not tributary. It is curious that though the Jekri chiefs were undoubtedly of Benin origin, and of the royal line, the Jekri people are evidently more Yoruba than Benin.

and took the royal title of Uvorami Nabashi. The Ojomo and the Ewagwe were objects of suspicion even when I was there, and it is certain that the king was especially anxious for European support and countenance, as he knew well the large party there was against him. Orukotu would have been killed but that the king's mother begged him off. I was in Benin River when King Adola died, and awful stories reached me of the massacres going on in Benin to celebrate his decease, but it appeared later from accounts in Benin, that these massacres were not all sacrifices to celebrate the king's death, but that in the suppression of the open attempt made in favour of Orukotu, great numbers were killed."

Nyendaël does not appear to say anything of regal inheritance, mentioning only that the eldest sons of the chiefs inherited. This would, however, show that the inheritance by the eldest son was a custom of the country. The War Captain's post was inherited by his son (Fawckner p. 81), but nothing is said about his being the eldest. This was the case with Ojomo. He showed Mr. Punch his eldest son, Ocome, saying he was to succeed him. Dapper and Landolphe give a contrary view. It is usually the custom that a chief or 'big man' will choose his own heir from among his sons, of whom he may have a great number. This son will be chosen for his business capacity; it is therefore the more remarkable that in Benin the eldest son is said always to succeed to his father's throne.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Punch suggests that the title of a noble descended by right to the eldest son, subject to the king's approval, and it was in the king's gift. The law of inheritance in property must have been largely influenced by the fact that the king claimed every man and woman, even his own children, to be his slaves, consequently no one owned any property. The fact that the crown descended to the eldest son may have influenced local ideas, but primogeniture is not the basis of inheritance in West Africa.

Mr. C. Punch gives me the following particulars of the ceremonies connected with the inheritance of the crown: "On a king's death the event was kept concealed by the immediate retainers. There was an understudy to the royal person, but I cannot remember the name which was given to the office. During the king's life the understudy was a privileged person and enjoyed royal privileges and honour. On the king's death the understudy carried on the duties of king until the people in authority were ready to proclaim the new king. The old king's death was then announced and the understudy disappeared. I fancy I was introduced to Adubowa's understudy, but cannot remember very clearly.

"On the proclamation of the king's death the new king began to do ceremonies, which were long and extended for over a year. He was only king elect until every rite was fulfilled. On completion of every rite he ascended a step towards the king's throne, and on full completion he sat on the throne; 'chopped King' was the pigeon-English expression. At each rite there were human sacrifices. I was told that 200 men, 200 women and 200 various animals were sacrificed, but I cannot say that it was so. The new king constructed a large compound in memory of his father with a sacrificial altar at one end, and in one corner a pit, called 'iyo,' into which the bodies of the victims were thrown.

"On the occasion of my first visit, Adubowa had almost completed the compound in memory of Adola, and in fact the big, carved doors of iroko wood (*Chlorophora excelsa*)

<sup>1</sup> At Onitsha, the kingship is not hereditary from father to son, but the inheritor must be of the royal family, and is chosen by the chiefs of the town; he may be an uncle, brother, nephew, son, &c., &c.

were covered with Muntz metal, which I obtained for the king. The pit was empty and only just finished. It was about 60 feet deep, and the ladders used in digging it were still close to it. There was a story that these pits were dug until a stratum of lignite or some pitchy substance was reached, and this was the sign that they were deep enough. The diggers then swarmed up the ladders, but the last man was left down alive to begin the sacrifice. Looking down the hole we saw no body at the bottom, but then we could not really see the bottom.

"I do not think that the completion of the compound was part of the rites done by the king in attaining his throne. It was more than a year after Adola's death and Adubowa was full king, yet the compound was not finished. Whether this was so or not, it was obligatory on the king to 'make his father,' and again there were sacrifices, and every year afterwards; a king would also make sacrifices in the compounds of other dead kings. I should say the actual number of victims has been exaggerated. Probably a large number were sacrificed at the coronation, and at the completion of the compound, and perhaps two or three at the annual service."



FIG. 97.

FIG. 98.

FIGS. 97 and 98.—Two views of small bronze object. Height  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. (14 c.m.)  
Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

## CHAPTER X

### SLAVERY

All slaves strangers—Male slaves not sold—Slaves exported from Benin are not Binis—Subjects sold—People treated as slaves—An honour to be called a king's slave—Slave villages—State of slavery before export slave trade—Physically deformed slaves or bad slaves immolated as occasion offered—English slave trade at Benin stopped through bad climate (104)—Work of women slaves—The unhappy lot of a slave—Value of a slave—Slaves rise to power—Sobo and Jekri slaves—Piece of tusk for a slave (105).

NYENDAEL has it that in Benin all male slaves are foreigners, "for the natives cannot be sold for slaves, but are all free, and alone bear the name of the king's slaves. Nor is it allowed to export any male slaves that are sold in this country, for they must stay there; but females may be dealt with at every one's pleasure." According to Landolphe (I., p. 101) all the slaves who are trafficked in Benin and Warri come from outside these territories. Lieut. King found that "the king can sell his subjects when convicted of crime, or when they have incurred his displeasure." The royal right of abuse seems to have survived to the last days, for Gallwey (p. 129) mentions that "the Benin people are free, but are treated as slaves by the king, the title of king's slave being considered an honour." We have seen above that for different reasons the king claimed male children, widows and slaves belonging to deceased subjects; he could hardly get much more, so that the mass of the people were practically slaves to the king, and those who were not to the king were so to their chiefs.

While travelling many miles in the interior, Lieut. King found settlements (*villes coloniales*) belonging to a single individual, and inhabited by slaves, the proprietor residing in Warri or some other maritime or commercial town. This confirms Dapper's statement that the king gave whole villages, with the people and slaves, to some successful *jujumen*. In Calabar and its neighbourhood, the local kings had their slave villages, the inhabitants of which brought their produce to the town for sale, or disposed of it otherwise, according to arrangement with the owner, but whether this system of slave villages was the same as that which existed in Calabar remains yet to be shown. Here, as elsewhere, the peculiar position of the king, in whom was centralised all power and ownership, may have modified slave proprietorship in the Benin country.

"Before the slave trade commenced, the king and the rich immolated many slaves and all prisoners of war, but since they have found a profitable output for these in exchange for European goods, they now only sacrifice the maimed, the deformed, and those with whom they can do nothing" (Beauvais, p. 145).

The same traveller remarks at one of the human sacrifices at which he was present, that the slaves immolated all had some visible defects which would have

caused their rejection by the slave traders (p. 149). This is confirmed by Roupell's officials, who say that all the slaves sacrificed were bad men or bad with sickness. The export slave trade grew to enormous extent, and its decay, at Benin in particular, is ascribed to the English by Adams (p. 116), but chiefly to the extreme unhealthiness of the climate.<sup>1</sup> It must not however be supposed that the export slave trade mitigated the status of those left behind, for when there were not enough slaves to be sacrificed, as we have seen above, anyone who could be caught was sacrificed. Slaves were sacrificed to expiate the misdemeanours of the master. (Nyendaël).

As for the women, Nyendaël found them in Benin "as much slaves as in any place in this kingdom. They are obliged to keep the daily markets, look after their housekeeping and children, as well as their kitchens, and till the ground. In short, they have so much employment, that they ought not to sit still; notwithstanding which, they dispatch it all very briskly, and with a great deal of pleasure."

The lot of the slaves was not a happy one. Burton evidently mixes up the Jekri canoe slaves, whose lot is a hard one, with the agricultural slave, who had not a very bad time of it, when he writes in his forcible and exaggerated way (p. 141): "they must work under the lash from four p.m. to three a.m., upon four ounces of boiled yam or plantain. Two such meals will probably be allowed them while pulling one hundred miles. They are mere anatomies, they will rifle the pails which the ship's pigs refuse, and, remember, this is in times of plenty. More than half-starved, they are always the first to make a disturbance when their miserable pittance is curtailed." A master would probably be hard on a slave boy, although unkindness to children is most unusual in a West African. And at Gwato, he says, (p. 412) "as usual, the adults kept all for themselves. The small boy Rapidly, a slave to Sawaye, who had attached himself to us, was hardly allowed a morsel, his master snatching it from his hands until we taught him better manners. These little wretches can never, however, be rewarded; whatever of dress or diet is given to them will at once be appropriated by the proprietor, or he failing, by anyone senior and stronger." Gallwey, however, does not seem to think the lot of the slave such a bad one. He says: "Among the Jekries, domestic slavery is in existence, most of the slaves being bought from the neighbouring Sobo tribe. The value of a



FIG. 99.—From a sketch by Mr. C. Punch to show how the piece of tusk was measured to be cut off in exchange for a slave.

full grown man is about £10. The Jekries are free men and do no work.... Domestic slavery as it exists in the Jekri country has many points in its favour. There is really very little difference between the lot of a good slave and a freeman, except that the former works while the latter does not. They are housed and fed by their

<sup>1</sup> The climate was apparently as bad 350 years ago as it is now: for Welch tells us, in his first voyage, out of 140 men he lost 40. At Gwato, Landolphe saw on one occasion the French, English, Dutch and Portuguese vessels lose three-fourths of their crews in six weeks. (I., p. 307).



masters, and are given positions of trust, and in many cases they rise to be masters themselves, as in the case of the late King Ja-Ja of Opobo, who was originally a slave.....The Sobos do not keep slaves, but are bought as such by the Benin and Jekri people " (p. 127).

"Gallwey must have been misinformed about the price of a Sobo slave, for the price of a slave from the Sobos was a span (see Fig. 99) cut off the large end of a large tusk of an elpehant, and the piece so cut was the common ivory bracelet affected by the Sobos " (C. Punch).



FIG. 100.—Double gourd quiver, Length  $23\frac{1}{2}$  in. (59.7cm.) British Museum.



FIG. 100A,—Bronze Statuette of mounted horseman. In the possession of Mr. James Pinnock, Liverpool.

## CHAPTER XI

### COURT LIFE AND ETIQUETTE

Courtiers coming to Court—Side seats—Supported by retinue—Music (108)—Work of king's slaves—Royal gifts of food—Abject position of Court visitors (109)—One king speaks Portuguese—Dapper's authority never at Court—Nyendael's interview with the king—No direct speech with the king (110)—Behaviour of slaves carrying presents for king—Precaution to secure king against poisoning—Landolphe's interview (111)—King's retinue—Interpreter falls on his belly and holds hand before his mouth—Description of the king—Beauvais on humiliating attitude of those who seek audience with the king (112)—Lieut. King's interview—Prostration of the king's subjects—Adams' interview (113)—The king short of tobacco—Dress of king and courtiers—Fawckner's interview (115)—Moffat and Smith's interview—Remarks on the slave trade—Burton's interview (116)—King's retinue "big men"—Description of the king—Etiquette difficulties—Belzoni's books (118)—Gallwey's interview—Curious survival of the old etiquette (119)—The Queen-Mother—Mr. Punch's interviews—Fanning the chiefs (125)—Ceremonial washing of feet,

AFTER speaking of the king's dwelling, D.R. continues: "The king has also many courtiers who, when they come to court, all ride upon horses, and sit upon horses as women and girls do with us, and they have one on each side a man running, on whom they lean,<sup>1</sup> and according to the greatness of their estate, so do they have



FIG. 101. Plaque representing a nobleman, gentleman or chief riding and supported by two attendants; a boy leading the horse. British Museum.



FIG. 102. Plaque representing a noble or chief with attendants holding their shields or rather fans over his head to protect him from the sun, as described by D.R.

many men following. Some of these carry great shields or umbrellas wherewith they keep their squire or nobleman from the sun (fig. 102). The latter walk nearest to him

<sup>1</sup> At a Malay reception at Kuching, Borneo, the Rani of Sarawak and Miss North were thus conducted by their elbows (Marianne North, *Recollections*, Lond., 1892, I., p. 241).

excepting those on whom the rider leans, who are closest, the rest come after him, playing some on drums, others blowing horns and whistles, some have a hollow iron whereon they strike (Fig. 108). The horse, also, is led by a man, and so the squire rides playing to court. Those who are very great and important lords have another kind of music when they ride to court; for their men have special instruments like the game bags with which men in our country go to fish market; this net is filled with various

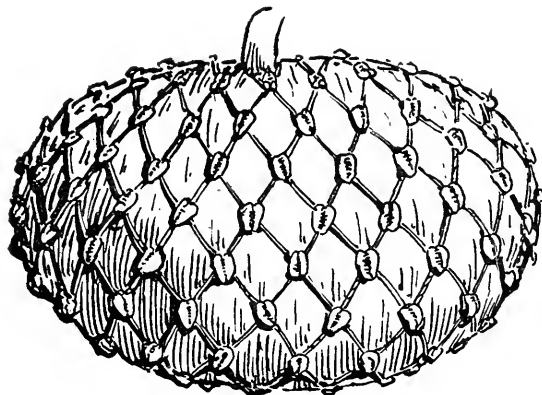


FIG. 103. The rattle mentioned by D.R. From a sketch by Mr. C. Punch. "This was an ordinary round calabash with a loose net over it, and at each knot was a small seed or cowrie. The instrument was held and shaken in both hands and made a crisp sound, which would be pleasing to savages and children" C.P.



FIG. 104. Court Fan, from a sketch by Mr. C. Punch.

things, and when they strike upon it with their hands it rattles just as if a heap of walnuts were inside and were struck with the hands (Fig. 103). A very grand nobleman has many of these instruments, and his servants run after him making a great rattling as he rides to court." Later on D.R. repeats himself somewhat when he says: "The noblemen go with great reverence and respect to court, and are accompanied by many negroes or common moors, one with a drum, another with another instrument on which they play. When they go on horseback they place a little wooden stool on the horse, and on its neck they hang a bell, which rings when the horse goes; there must always be two negroes walking one on either side, on whom the nobleman leans, and these negroes and moors attend at the noblemen's doors every morning and stay there till they come out for them to lean on them." Of the king himself, we are told, "he owns many men and women, that is slaves, and one often sees the women slaves carrying water, yams and palm oil, which they say is for the king's wives. One also sees many men slaves carrying water, yams and palm oil, which they say is for the king, and many are seen carrying grass, which is for the horses, and all that which is mentioned is carried on their heads. The king occasionally sends out presents of foods, as a special honour from his court, which are carried in grand order through the streets, for the carriers all march in single file, and by their side there are always

some persons who carry white wands, so that the people should make way for the carriers, for every man must give way and step aside however stately or eminent a squire or noble he may be."

Apart from the bare references to royal interviews, Windam is the first European to give us any account of a visit to the king. He says: "When his noblemen are in his presence, they never look him in the face, but sit cowering, as we upon our knees, so they upon their buttocks with their elbows upon their knees, and their hands before their faces, not looking up until the king command them. And when they are coming toward the king, as far as they doe see him, they do shew such reverence, sitting on the ground with their faces covered as before. Likewise when they depart from him, they turn not their backs toward him, but goe creeping backward with like reverence. And now to speak somewhat of the

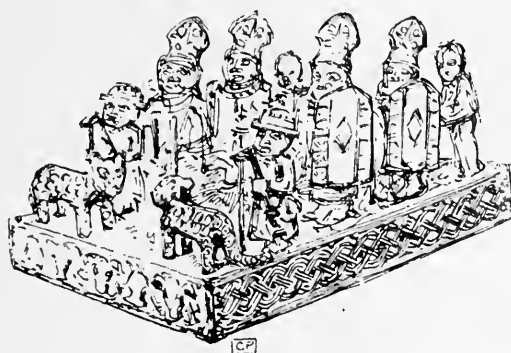


FIG. 105. Bronze group apparently representing some ceremony. Compare the mitred men with the individual in fig. 134, and note Nyendaël's remarks regarding the "shields" (fig. 134).

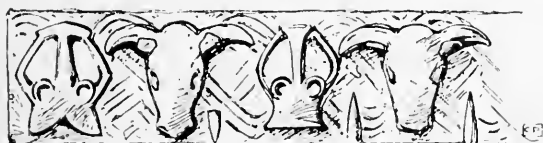


Fig. 106. Portion of relief of base of fig. 105 with alternate inverted heads.



FIG. 107. Plaque representing a seated figure of a chief with kneeling attendants. British Museum.

communication that was between the king and our men, you shall first understand that he himself could speake the Portugall tongue, which he had learned of a child. Therefore after he had commanded our men to stand up, and demanded of them the cause of their coming into that country, they answered by Pinteado that they were merchants, etc., etc." Dapper, although he goes very fully into other details, does not say anything about the court, which he would probably have done had his authority mentioned it, and it may possibly be due to this circumstance that Bosman ridicules Dapper. The next account is from Nyendaël's pen: "In the first apartment, at the entrance of the plain, is the king's audience-chamber, where, in presence of his three great lords, I saw and spoke with him. He was sitting on an ivory couch, under a canopy of Indian silk. He was a person of an affable mien, about forty years old. I stood, according to custom, about thirty paces distant from him; but desired, in order to observe him the better, that I might approach nearer to him; which, though unusual, he smilingly granted; and after he had beckoned me, I

advanced to within eight or ten paces of him. There was no person in the hall besides the three mentioned great lords, the king, and a negro with a drawn sword in his hand, who looked as fierce as a cabin boy. Whatever any person would say to the king, must be first told to these three, who then repeat it to him and bring his answer; going thus to and from him without any persons being able to determine whether they faithfully report the messages on either side. On the king's left hand, against a fine tapestry, I saw seven white scowered elephants' teeth on pedestals of



FIG. 108. Bronze Plaque. The boy on the left being furnished with an Ebere, points to the representation as that of some court ceremony or feast. Height 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (40 cm.) Liverpool Museum.

ivory, which is the manner that almost all the king's gods are placed within his house. I presented the king with a silk night-gown, with which, as I was afterwards told, he was highly pleased; but whilst I was with him, I saw no signs of his satisfaction, because it was brought to him covered, and he did not see what it was till after my departure; for everything brought to the king is in like manner covered with mats; and before and behind these presents several negroes march, provided with white staves. All those who happen to meet them in this posture, immediately make haste out of the way, otherwise, they would be very well beaten. This precaution is taken to prevent all opportunity of poisoning the king's goods, or killing him." This was in 1702. "It was the rule to cover up the presents for the king, as he objected to the nobles knowing if he received anything. The white staves of Nyendaël are the peeled wand already mentioned" (C. Punch).



After a long interval, we get some fresh information about court receptions from Landolphe, whose first interview with the then King of Benin in 1789, took place at 11 p.m. He was accompanied by an interpreter called Cupid, and introduced by two passadors and escorted by twenty-four blacks armed with assegais and carrying each a lamp with four wicks. They "passed through many spacious courts, in one of which were the tombs of the Kings of Benin, but which I was not allowed to examine. Leaving this I was introduced into a large apartment where an armchair had been placed for me, and I was left alone with the passadors. I had to wait nearly half-an-hour for the monarch. He came accompanied by two blacks quite naked, about twenty years old, and armed with a damas [? the *Ada* or cutlass]. They ordered the passadors to retire. The king, who was wrapped in rich white Indian muslins, told Cupid to tell me to approach, and also told him to interpret properly all I had to

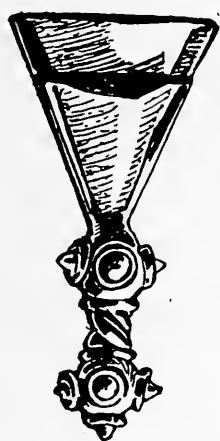


FIG. 109.



FIG. 110.

FIGS. 108 & 109.—Small brass objects from Ashanti, so-called "gold weights," probably itinerant story-tellers' aids to memory or story emblems. Fig. 109 represents a double bell form, and fig. 110 a man striking the object. Compare this with Fig. 120. In the possession of Capt. C. H. Armitage, D.S.O.

say. Cupid therefore threw himself flat on his belly at the feet of his master [i.e., the king], raising his head a little to look at him, and placing his hand horizontally a little above his mouth just as though he feared his breath might reach the royal face." Having explained the object of Landolphe's visit, viz., to establish a factory, and making a reference to the English, of whom the king is reported to have said they were wicked people, and giving the king his gifts, the king said he must refer the question to his council. On seeing some of his presents, the king said "the whites are gods for cleverness and work." Landolphe thus describes the king: "He had a beautiful frank face, and although about sixty-six years of age, there was not a furrow to be seen on it. He was about five foot five inches high, straight and dignified. His eyes were bright and he spoke vigorously; his hair, which was growing grey, was worn Grecian fashion. He wore round his waist fine beautifully white stuffs down to his knees, put on in a very elegant manner. He wore no shirt. In fact, his dress was the usual one for men and women on the West Coast" (I., pp. 103-109). From Beauvais we get the following about the king: "Every individual considers himself an absolute slave of the king. The Binis and even the blacks of

the neighbouring populations, speak to him only in the most humiliating attitude, that is, on their knees, their eyes fixed on the ground, and their hand covering the



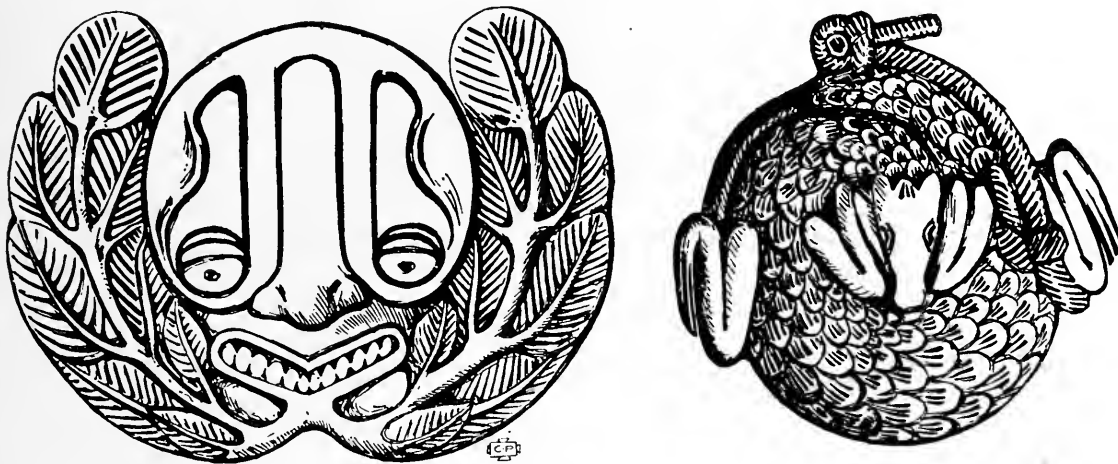
FIG. 111. Brass enchased stool with appliqué work. FIG. 112. Copper polished stool with appliqué work.  
In the possession of Sir Ralph Moor, K.C.M.G., Governor of Southern Nigeria.  
[For description see next page.]

mouth for fear lest their breath might reach him. Europeans, however, like other native princes are allowed to speak to him standing, but must do so through an interpreter, who has to demean himself as just mentioned."

Lieut. King's account of a visit to the king runs: "When the king entered the audience hall, he was dressed in cloth according to the custom of the country, and

wore a big round hat festooned with gold ; one of his arms was extended horizontally, being supported by one of his high state officials ; the nail of one of his fingers on each hand was immensely long, in order to show that his high position placed him above the necessity of working. He gave his hand to Lieut. King and motioned him to a seat. From time to time he sat on the royal stool. All his subjects prostrate themselves before the king, touching the ground with the forehead."

Adams on his arrival at Gwato, found that it was the practice "for masters of vessels to pay the king a visit soon after their arrival, and such a ceremony is seldom allowed to be dispensed with, as on these occasions the black monarch receives a handsome present, consisting of a piece of silk damask, a few yards of scarlet cloth,



FIGS. 113 & 114. Appliqué work ornaments on the brass stool (p. 112).

FIGS. 111-114. Whether these were royal stools or not we cannot say, but the royal stool on which the king sat when he granted an interview to Lieut. King, was made of copper, about 18ins high. The Lieut. tells us that "every king on his accession to the throne has a new stool which is placed on his tomb. The shape of the stool varies according to the taste of the monarch. One of those which Mr. King saw on the tomb of a king was supported by copper serpents, of which the heads touched the ground forming the feet." Mr. Cyril Punch remembers very well seeing these articles. They were lying about in one of the compounds, and he writes me "one could not help being struck with their similarity to the Delphic Tripod in the Hippodrome of Constantinople. Probably this is only a coincidence. I do not put much importance on their having once been used as a stool. I tried hard to get from Aguramassi what they were made for, but he would only laugh and say they were there for play."

and some strings of coral" (p. 111). He therefore went to Benin, and thus describes his interview: "The day following my arrival, I had the honour of an interview with him ; he received me with much politeness, particularly after the fine flashy piece of red silk damask, which I had brought with me as a present for him, had been unfolded. The conversation was carried on with the aid of the king's trader, who resides at Gatto, and who had accompanied me from thence to act as my linguist. Trade was the principal, indeed the only subject discussed ; for King Bowarre, although he is both a god and a king, trades, nevertheless, in slaves and ivory. The Benin people, like those of Ardrah and Lagos, are great consumers of Brazil tobacco, not any vessels loaded with which had for some time arrived from the Brazils. This was a subject of much conversation, and of deep regret on the part of the king. The

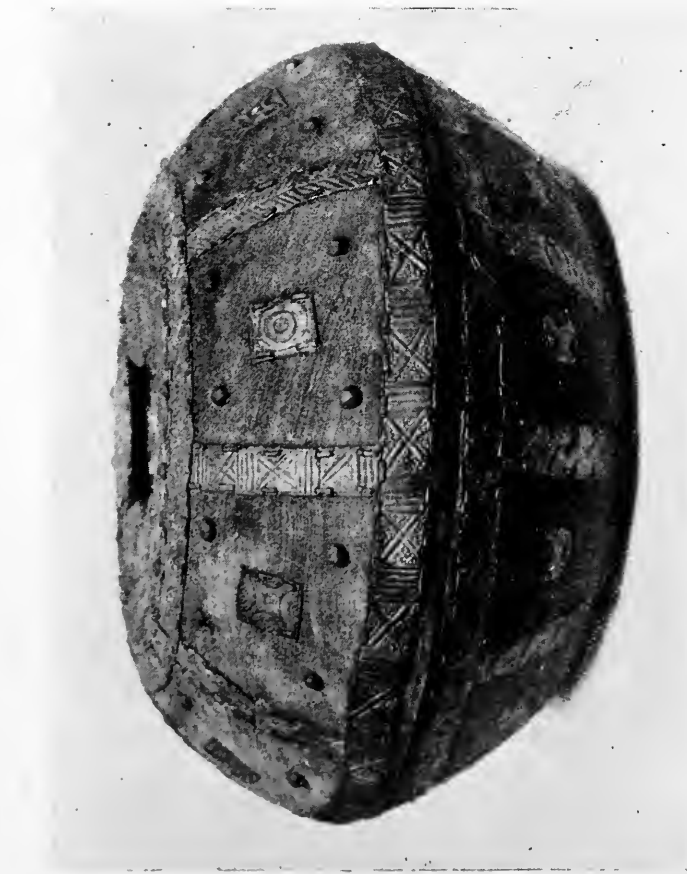


FIG. 115. Side View.



FIG. 116. Top View.

FIGS. 115 & 116. Wooden Kola Nut Box mounted in thin repoussé brass. Height 8in. (20·3cm.), Diam. 14½in. (36·8cm.) British Museum. Foods, etc., were also carried in these boxes as described by Dapper. (See p. 108).

audience lasted about one hour; he then presented me with two or three country cloths, and a small piece of ivory, when I made my bow and took my leave of him. The king and his principal courtiers are ostentatious in their dress, wearing damask, taffety, and cuttanee, after the country fashion. Coral is a very favourite ornament in the royal seraglio, which is always well filled; and the women, like those of the Heebo [Ibo] nation, wear a profusion of beads, if they can by any means obtain them."

The next record is that of Captain Fawckner, not many years later. His account is very nearly as meagre as that of the two Englishmen who preceded him. "On entering the apartment I perceived his majesty; a fine, stout, handsome man, with something of kingly dignity about him. He was clothed in a long robe, and wore a large hat ornamented with gold lace. Several chiefs, in full dress, surrounded him, besides a body guard on either side, with drawn swords. On my approaching him, he held out his arm, which three young princes stepped forward and supported." (p. 87).

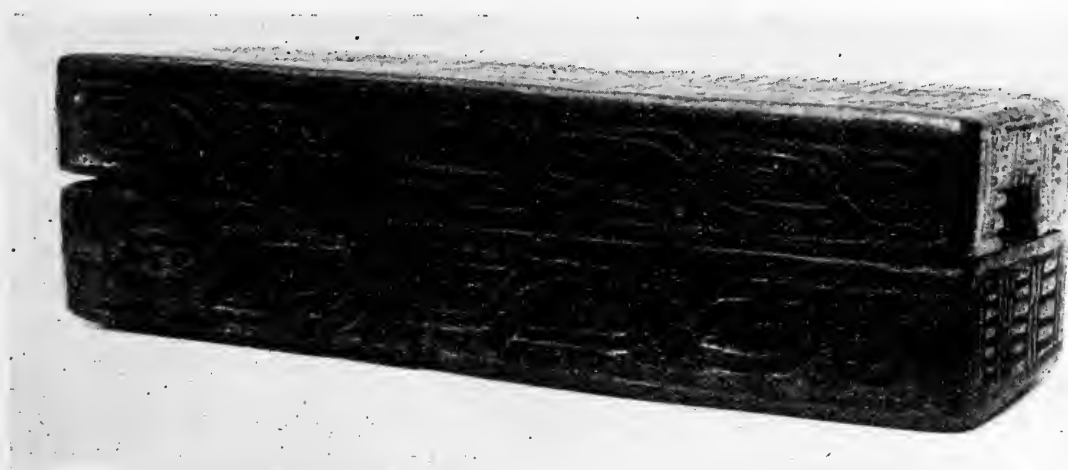


FIG. 117. Wooden Box for holding kola nuts when sent round by a chief.  $9\frac{1}{8}$  in. long  $\times$   $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide (23 cm.  $\times$  9 cm.) Liverpool Museum.

Then follows the short account of Moffat and Smith, in 1838. "It was with considerable difficulty, and not till after the expiration of four days—during which they were often asked, 'What are you come for?', and when they answered, 'For trade,' 'What goods and presents then do you bring?' was immediately added—that they obtained an interview with the king. Before being admitted to his presence, they were obliged to comply with the custom of washing their hands and feet, and partaking of a [Kola] nut, which here, as in other parts of this quarter of Africa, is always presented to strangers. The king, who is a robust old man, affected much dignity, and would not allow them to approach near his person. His demands for permission to open trade at Gatto were at first extremely unreasonable, but he at last agreed to moderate terms, and desired to see both of the gentlemen again before their departure from the city. It was necessary to spend a whole day in going the round among the Phoe does; and, this having been done, Mr. Moffat, Mr. Smith having been taken ill, again waited on the king, to take leave previous to their departure for Gatto. The king put several questions to him about the slave trade, and asked when the

king of England was going to settle 'that palaver,' *i.e.* to allow slave-trading; and when told that 'that palaver' would never be settled, he burst into a rage, and said the king of England was a bad man to steal vessels on the sea, alluding to the capture of slavers, and that he would send a letter to him on the subject, as one of his people could write English." (Jour. Roy. Geogr. Soc., xi., 1841, pp. 191-2).

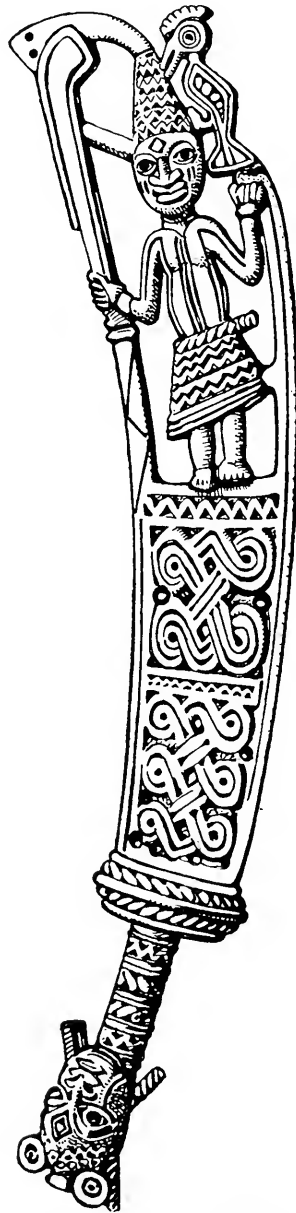


FIG. 118. Bronze ornamental *Ada* probably carried in procession in front of a chief. British Museum.

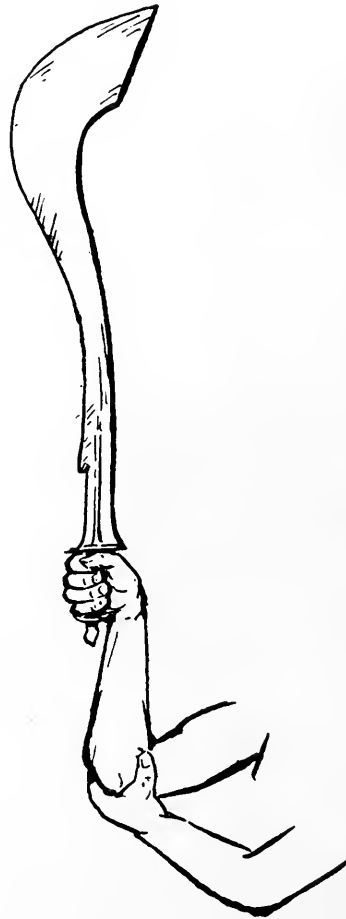


FIG. 119. "The official sword or cutlass called *Ada* in Benin (*Daibo* in Jekri.) It was not held by the king himself, but carried in front of the king, the Ahuraku and the Ojoma by a naked youth. It was held in the right hand with the edge forward, with left hand supporting the right arm under the elbow. What the significance of the regulation posture was, is not clear. The *Ada* was also used by the king's executioners." From a sketch by Mr. C. Punch.

Burton's account is as follows: "At the end of a long half-hour, a door to the right at the top of the room opened, and in crowded some thirty fellows of stalwart proportions and huge forms, entirely exposed. It was a truly savage sight and novel, unknown to any of the courts of Yoruba. These men are called the king's cutlass boys, and they wear no dress until their master deigns to 'dash' [present] them a



cloth. Every male infant in the kingdom is still presented to the king, and belongs to him of right; hence, all the youths in the land are called the king's boys or slaves. The naked mob took its place on the right hand of the throne, crowding into the corner, and the man nearest the royal seat carried upright in both hands a huge handless falcion of native make, fashioned like an exaggeration of the old Turkish scimitar. The rest were wholly unarmed, nor did we see a single weapon either in the court or in the city. The cutlass boys were followed by half a dozen 'homograns,' whose numbers gradually

increased to ten. They ranged themselves in line along the raised step, perpendicular to the left of the throne. All were old men with senile figures, offensively thin or hideously pot-bellied. They were naked to the waist, and wore immense white muslin or taffetas peshwaz, or petticoats, extending to the swell of the leg, and puffed out to a balloon shape by kilts acting crinoline. Each had his anklets and collar of coral, a very quaint decoration, composed of pieces about one inch long, and so tightly strung that it forms a stiff circle about a foot in diameter. Lastly came the king, supported by two men, who led him to the wooden bench upon which a mat had been placed, disposed his loin-cloth, and held both his arms. Jambra, whose regal name is Atolo, and whose title is Obba, or King, is a stout young man, about thirty-five years of age. His complexion is dark, but his aspect is uncommonly intelligent, and the expression of his countenance is mild and good-humoured. During this and the subsequent audience, he smiled graciously



FIG. 120. Bronze plaque representing an official striking a sistrum (the striker broken). See reference by D.R., p. 108. Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

upon his visitors, and our impression was that he is the best looking negro we had ever seen. His dress was highly becoming—coral bracelets adorned his wrists, and his pagne, which, loosely gathered round the waist, covered his naked feet, was a red silk with broad stripes of yellow. We stood up and unhatted, whilst a messenger bade us go forward and 'make service.' The consul objected to walking through the muddy and watery *impluvium*, and after some time obtained a partial clearing (the vulgar, which was excluded during Dr. Henry's audience, was now permitted to remain) of the step running along the left side of the room. As we approached the place where the naked cutlass boys crowded, there were some murmurs, signs to

stand back, and even to kneel. The officers passed on to the step in front of the throne. Again voices were heard. The consul, however, placed himself in front of his majesty, and after a low bow, introduced the commander and his other companions. The king acknowledged the compliment with a nod and a smile. The attendants proceeded to spread a mat on the step below and to the right of the throne; the consul, however, objected to sit with patent leather boots in the dirty *piscina*, and the visitors were allowed to return to their original bench, which was now wet with the profuse leakings of the roof. Then the palaver commenced. It was carried on by two interpreters, Sawaye of Gwato, and Ogonna, of Benin; George, the old 'parson's' son, remaining by our side. The two former, when they addressed the king, knelt—not prostrated themselves—upon the step below the throne. The latter, as a kind of cousin, sat at squat. Each message began with 'king he send you service,' a formula duly returned. The state of Liverpool—

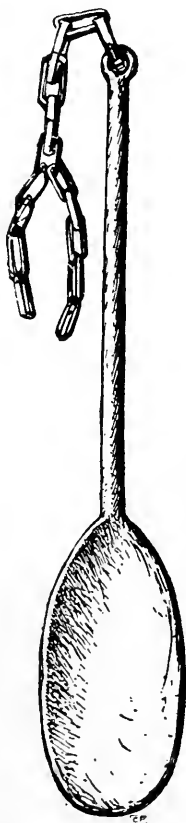


FIG. 121. Bronze Ladle, probably for putting oil on the wick of the broad lamps.

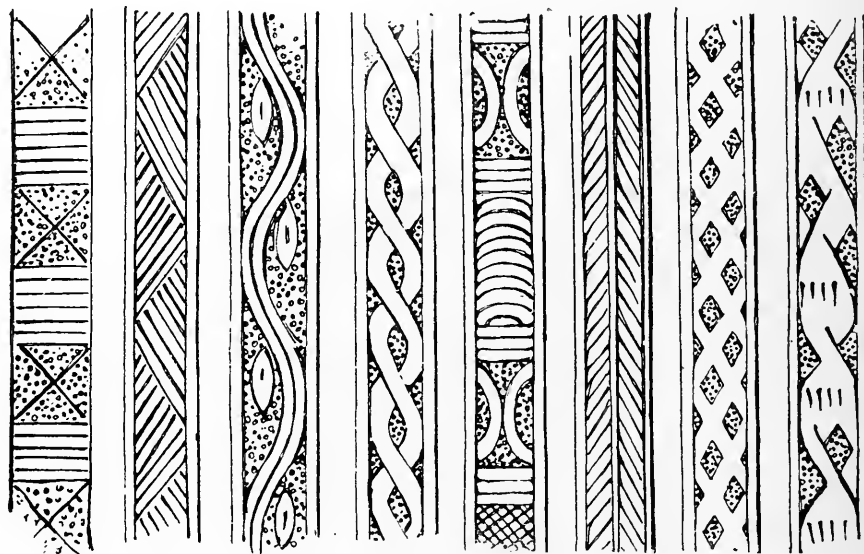


FIG. 122. Designs on arms of hand lamp (fig. 126).

that is to say, England—was first inquired into and answered. The consul then complained of his treatment on the previous day. Of this the king palpably knew nothing, and the interpreters, as usual, slurred it over. Then came a lengthy enquiry on the part of the Obba, why white men did not trade to Gwato and Benin, and a request that the 'Governor would direct them to do so.' That personage replied that if his majesty would send down messengers, and establish a firm rule, European traders would not be slow to appear. Lastly, as the hour was waxing late, the consul stated that if Belzoni's papers could be recovered it would give great pleasure to the 'king,' his sovereign; adding that he would return a bale of cloth, value twenty pounds, for the trouble. The Obba kindly promised to send a messenger round with orders for the 'books' to be given up. Then followed the usual difficulty of an African court dismissal."

In later days when visited by Gallwey, there was still considerable etiquette at court: "In each of the compounds are a number of king's stewards, a brass anklet, and sometimes not even that being the sum total of their wardrobe. Very few of

these functionaries have access to the king's presence, the penalty for passing beyond their own particular compound being death. The king keeps up a good deal of state, only a chosen few being permitted to speak to him direct. He is a very busy personage, attending to all state matters himself." (p. 130).

After reading the above descriptions, Mr. Punch, who visited Benin several times, writes me pointing out that apparently there was little or no change in the ceremonies as recorded in the past, when compared with the ceremonies he himself took part in. "It is not as if Europeans had constantly frequented Benin. There are lapses of generations between the recorded visits, yet at the end of so many centuries the courtiers seemed to know all the details which were *en règle* when a European arrived. Practically, Nyendael's reception was the same as my own. It is remarkable that the traditions which regulate the ceremonies should have been handed down so carefully."

As at many African courts, the Queen Mother is a woman of importance. Thus Dapper says: "The king's mother is held in great esteem and has a splendid court, at a little distance outside the town, beautifully and magnificently built, where she resides with many women and daughters. She is consulted in all state affairs; but by dint of a special law the king and his mother are not allowed to see each other, as long as they live." Lieut. King "was introduced to the Queen Mother, who resides in a walled town which belonged to her, situated about three or four miles from Benin. After having passed through two courts, he was conducted into an apartment where all sorts of refreshments were offered him. The queen entered soon afterwards, her right arm supported horizontally by one of her suite. She was dressed in European silks and laden with coral ornaments, and wore a big festooned hat, like that of her son. Through her interpreter, she addressed several questions to Lieut. King, such as 'How do you do?' 'What condition is your boat?' 'How did you cross the dangerous bar?'" Mr. Cyril Punch informs me that in his time the king's mother was called "Iyoba; she lived at a suburb called Iselu, about two miles north of Benin. She did everything the king did. From the day that he fulfilled the last rite which made him king, she never saw his face, but lived in her own quarter and practically had her own court."

"I remember," remarks Mr. Punch, "one rather impressive scene when poor Powis (afterwards killed in the massacre) and myself first went to Benin. It was after the first public reception in one of the compounds, when we were taken in the evening to the king's hall and kept waiting there for an endless time (fig. 123). The hall was large, about 60ft. by 40ft., with the usual cistern in the middle; we entered by door No. 3 and sat at a place marked D—people passing through all the time. As night fell the lamp C was lighted, and threw a ghastly light on a skull on the altar. Nobles kept coming in and took up their position on the right of the hall at A, many bringing with them the swing lamps already described (fig. 126); people also thronged in behind us at D. At length the king came in through the door from his private quarters. He was really elegantly dressed in flowing robes of gold and silver tissue, his arms being upheld by two of his own 'boys,' not by nobles. Many of his unclothed attendants thronged in behind him, and took up a position on the left side of the hall at B. Conversation between the king and ourselves was kept up by means of interpreters, who walked up and down the length of the hall with every question and answer. At the finish the king wished to see us closer, and so we were led up to where the fetish marks were on the floor at the king's end. Before leaving we

created great astonishment and amusement by insisting on shaking hands with the king in European fashion."

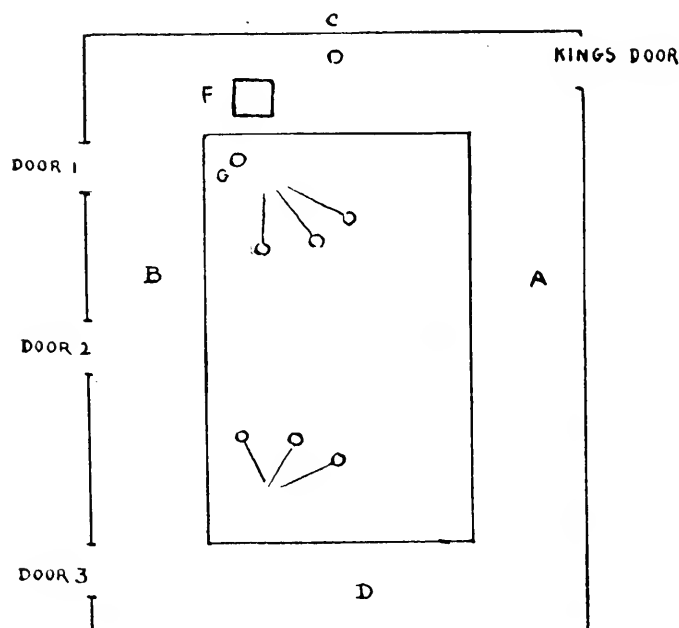


FIG. 123. Sketch Plan by Mr. C. Punch to illustrate a scene he witnessed at the Benin Court.

A Position taken up by nobles.

B Position of king's attendants.

C Large Lamp (see fig. 124).

D Position of Messrs. Powis & Punch  
F Juju altar painted white with a  
a sort of clay; on it was a  
human skull.

G Position of the king.

The straight lines with circles at  
the ends were white fetish marks.

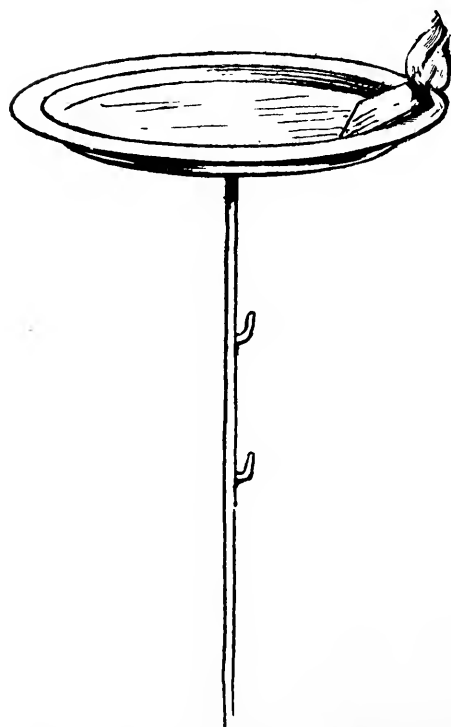


FIG. 124. Small Standard Lamp consisting of a flat brass dish on an iron stick put into the ground as mentioned in description of Plan (fig. 123, C.) In the bason was a spoon like instrument as shown in fig. 121, for trimming and feeding the wick; it was sometimes hung on the iron hooks of the iron upright. From a sketch by Mr. C. Punch.

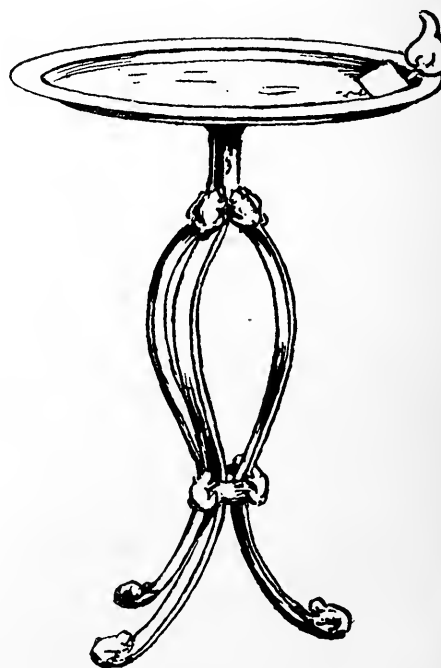


FIG. 125. Sketch from memory by Mr. C. Punch of the large Standard Lamps used in Benin. He writes me; "I have been struck by the large lamps in the compounds exciting so little remark. They were about 20 feet high and the receptacles for the oil and wick were about 4 feet in diameter. The stands were of wrought iron of good workmanship, and figures of toads, alligators, &c., were either *appliqué* or cast in the moulds and the bars hammered out to the required dimensions. These lamps were only alight on very big occasions."

"On another occasion, when I went to Benin and circumstances made it imperative that I should see the king the same night, I was taken by Aguramassi to the court where all the bronzes were kept. After waiting some time, the blast of



FIG. 126.

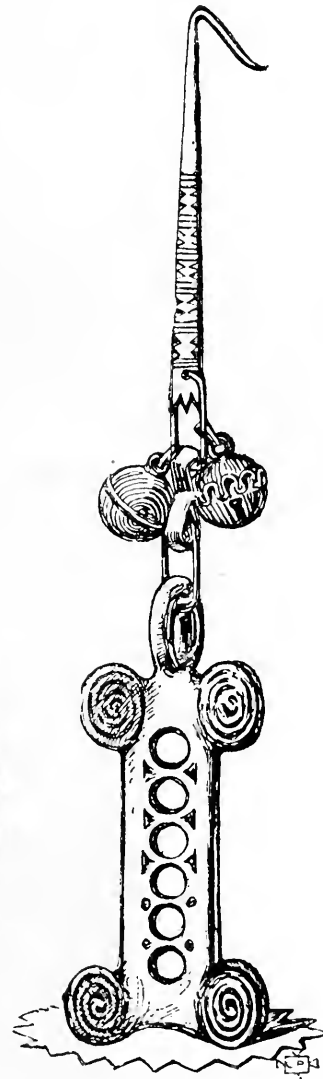


FIG. 127.

FIG. 126. A Benin Hand-Lamp. Every arm has a different design (see Fig. 122) and is about half an inch or 12 mm. wide; two of the arms are cracked and have been rivetted together by means of pieces of brass plate (*a*) and copper rivets (*b*). The diameter of the pan is about 15 inches (38 centimetres). It will be observed that the two hawkbells depending above the mannikins are of different pattern from those hanging on the snuffer fig. 127, the ornamentation being zigzag on one of the two and arched on the other. I have elsewhere pointed out that one of the dominant features of Benin art is its variety. "All the gentry had these lamps. Palm oil was put in the pan, and a piece of raw cotton wool placed on the edge of the pan served as a wick; a small flat piece of iron was placed on the top of the wick to prevent the oil all taking fire at once. Fig. 127 shows the implement used for snuffing and picking up the cotton wool. The open compounds at night, full of people and lit up with these lamps, were very striking" (C, Punch.)



FIG. 128. Bronze Plaque, Diam 10½ in. (26.7 cm.) British Museum.

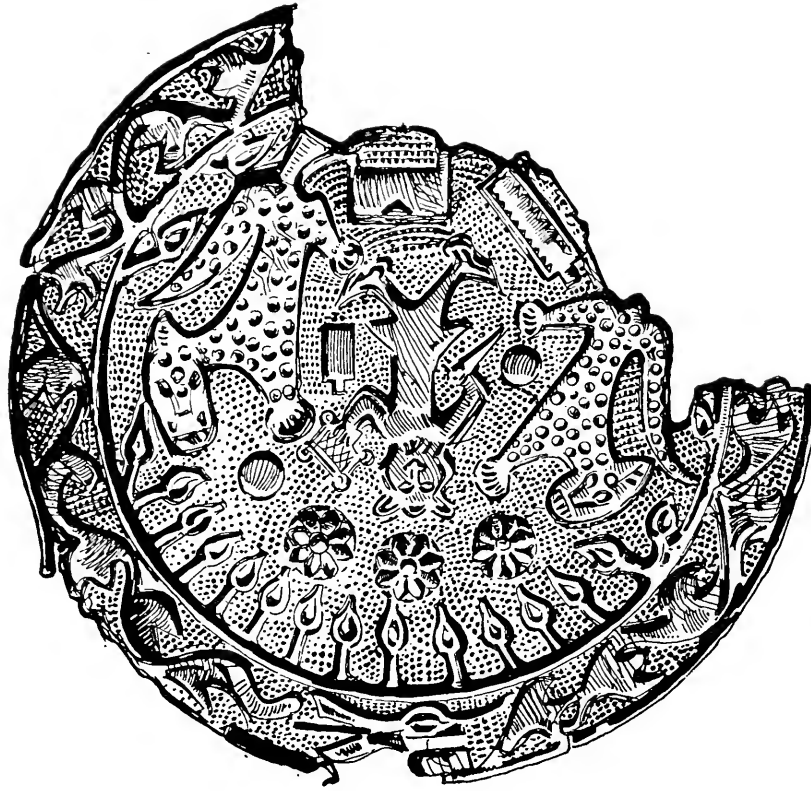


FIG. 129. Bronze Plaque, Diam. 10½ in. (26.7 cm.) British Museum.

FIGS. 128 & 129. These plaques although flat remind Mr. C. Punch of the old brass bowl in which at Gwato, the feet of European visitors used to be washed.



approaching horns was heard and Aguramassi opened the door a little bit, and as a great favour told me to admire the king. His majesty was approaching with followers from one side while Ewagwe and his followers approached from the other side. Both were dressed up in weird costumes and stepped out to meet each other, performing a very solemn sort of dance, after which Ewagwe retired, and the king entered the compound to talk with me. He had been doing some 'business' as the interpreter expressed it, and in so far as I could make out, Benin spent its nights and most of its days in doing these 'businesses,' whatever they were.

"I spoke above of the astonishment Powis and I created by shaking hands with the king. Of course ordinary people grovelled in front of his majesty, but after the first address by the nobles, the usual method was to strike the right hand, clenched, on the palm of the left hand, open, and then extend the clenched hand towards the king or chief, saying '*adow*.'"

"It was always 'quite the thing' for an African potentate to have at least two slaves fanning him. The usual shape of Bini fans was as shewn in Fig. 104, but sometimes they were shovel-shaped, and on occasion they may have been larger. They were made of cowhide (green) with the hair on, and bright coloured pieces of flannel or Haussa leather were sewn on to make the pattern. No Ukoba, starting out to make himself a nuisance to some village, would feel quite dressed without one of these fans—in fact, except the anklet and necklet, the fan was all he took in the way of clothes" (C. Punch).

On entering the country or the town, there was the curious custom which compelled a stranger to have his feet washed. Before entering the city, Legroing and Balon had to visit the captain of war, and have their feet washed. (Landolphe, I., p. 332). Similarly, Mr. C. Punch writes me: "On landing at Guaton, we were received on the top of the bluff by the Ahuraku and his suite, and a great point was made of our having our feet washed by them at a place sacred to the memory of Assigie, or Asije, the king of long-ago, first connected with Europeans. A very ancient brass bowl was produced for the purpose. This appeared to me to have been a bit of old Portuguese repoussé work, and was always left lying about in this place devoted to Assigie pending the arrival of some European." It will be remembered that all the members of Phillips' party had their feet washed at Gwato.

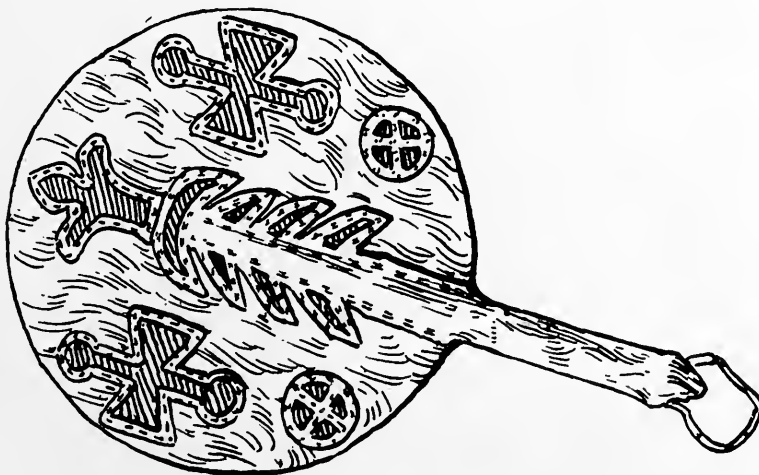


FIG. 130. Jekri fan of green cowhide with red flannel pattern in the form of a human figure and crosses. In the possession of the Author.

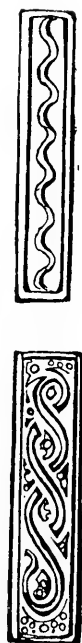


FIG. 131. Metal Wand. Length 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (85.8cm.). British Museum.

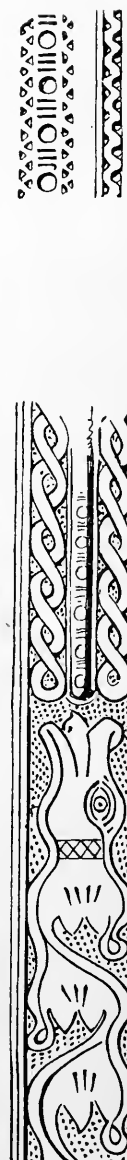


FIG. 132. Metal Wand. In the collection of Mr. R. K. Granville.

## CHAPTER XII

### WAR AND WEAPONS

Rapiers—Analagous weapons—Shields—Javelins, spears, assagais—Bows and poisoned arrows—Good marksmen—An archer opposes the Punitive Expedition—Cannons—Muskets—Method of holding guns—The army—2,000 to 100,000 men (126)—Field Marshal (Captain of War)—Army uniform—Discipline—Booty—Decay in Nyendaël's time (127)—Cowardice—Mules preferred to horses—Fate of unsuccessful commander—Power of War Captain (128)—His retinue—Fawckner's interview—War Captain a youth of 16—Burton's interview—War Captain drunk (130)—Description of the War Captain—Bad behaviour.

THE weapons in use by the Bini are frequently indicated on the carved ivory work and on the metal castings, but in the following pages are collected the notes on these articles as given by various travellers. We are told by D.R. that "they have a sort of weapon or rapier which is rather broad, and which hangs from their necks on a leather belt reaching till below their shoulders." Dapper does not mention this class of weapon, but Nyendaël speaks of cutlasses or hangers, and small poniards. Fawckner says he saw "some swords of their own manufacture, which were very well turned out of hand" (p. 82). D.R. speaks of the use of shields, but of these Nyendaël remarks they are so "light, and made of small bambus, that they cannot ward off anything that strikes with any force; so that they are rather ornamental, than really serviceable for defence." Javelins are mentioned by D.R.; spears and assagais by Dapper, and assagais by Nyendaël, but none of these writers explain the differences in these weapons. Dapper tells us they used "bows and poisoned arrows, which the fetizeros or demon-charmers prepare very carefully. After a battle, or at the end of the war, the remaining arrows are brought to the king's arsenal and put into special rooms; then so many new arrows as are wanted for a future war are immediately made and poisoned by the fetizeros or demon-charmers." Nyendaël also has it that the arrows were poisoned. This was done with *Strophanthus sarmentosus*, *Str. Preusii* and sp. not classified, all used with various kinds of nastiness added" (C. Punch.) "The boys are very early initiated into the arts of war and the use of arms; they use the bow and arrow with surprising dexterity, and seldom fail hitting their mark even at a great distance" (Fawckner, p. 65). Bacon when describing the work of the Punitive Expedition says bows and arrows were seen, but never was an arrow fired. The arrows found were poisoned, but the nature of the poison is unknown (p. 57). Dr. F. N. Roth, however, mentions an old man using bow and arrows. Fawckner observed two or three pieces of cannon, of British and Portuguese manufacture; but they were not mounted (p. 81), and "was credibly informed that they could make muskets, with the exception of the lock, in great perfection." He says they were celebrated in the use of the gun, which they hold in a peculiar manner. "For fear of accident they never bring the piece to the shoulder, but place the left hand against the end of the

stock, thus supporting it by the hands only. On one occasion I was a witness to the superiority of this plan over the ordinary method. A man discharged his piece, and it burst and shivered the barrel in pieces, whilst he did not sustain the slightest injury; had he fired as we are accustomed to do, his arm would have been shattered and his life endangered" (Fawckner, pp. 65-66).

From the Portuguese accounts we have seen that the kings of Benin were war-like, and must conclude that the soldiery was not without martial qualities. D.R. tells us that "the king has many soldiers which are subject to him, and they have a colonel [*sic*] over them like a captain. The captain has some of his own soldiers under him, and always goes in the middle of them, and they run round about him singing and leaping, making much noise and sport. Such captains are very proud of their office and bear themselves in a very stately manner, and go very magnificently



FIG. 133.



FIG. 134.

FIGS. 133 and 134.—Metal powder flasks.

through the streets." So too from Dapper we learn that "the King of Benin wages great wars against the neighbouring kings, i.e., beyond Benin to the east and north, and conquers many of their towns and villages, getting plenty of booty consisting of jasper and other things. He can call out twenty thousand well armed men in a day, and if needs be, eighty or a hundred thousand, on account of which fact he is much dreaded by all the surrounding peoples. His army is commanded by a field marshal (Owe-Asserry, in their language) who has supreme power, and is entitled to do anything like the king himself. The nobles when about to start for war, dress themselves in scarlet cloth bought from the Dutch, in order to outshine the others. Some wear collars made of elephant teeth with leopard teeth between, and high red Turkish caps, lined or bordered with leopard or civet-skins, from which a long horse tail hangs down by way of ornament. Common soldiers keep the upper part of their bodies naked, but from the hips downwards they wear a garment as fine as silk. In fighting they keep good discipline and order; for nobody is allowed to yield a step

although he sees death near. Nobody gets any of the booty but the field marshal, called by them Owe-Asserry or Seasaire, unless he take something secretly and stealthily; nevertheless everybody thanks the king for the honour of being esteemed worthy to march up and wage war for him."

Matters were, however, very different at the time when Nyendael paid his visits; he reports, "I cannot say much for their wars; for notwithstanding that they are continually fallen on by the pirates or robbers, and their neighbours not subject to the King of Benin, they yet are ignorant of the art of war; for being by necessity drawn into the field, their conduct is so very confused, that they themselves are ashamed of it. They have no officers or commanders and each man takes his own course, without regarding his neighbour. They are so very cowardly that nothing but the utmost necessity will oblige them to fight; and even then they had much rather suffer the greatest losses than defend themselves. When their flight is pre-



FIG. 135.—Plaque in the British Museum. The scene represents the bringing in a prisoner of distinction; in the background a figure similar to the prisoner, and two figures with drum and horn, belonging to the escort.



FIG. 136.—Plaque in British Museum representing the upper portion of the figure, with curious shaped hat, of a warrior, with helmet similar to a bishop's mitre. Note his shield and Nyendael's remarks on this article of defence, which are confirmed by C. Punch.

vented they return upon the enemy, but with so little courage and conduct, that they soon fling down their arms, and either run away, or surrender themselves." Nyendael, is however, very pessimistic. British experience of the native is, however, quite the contrary, in spite of the fact that they were badly armed when fighting against the Punitive Expedition, no one can say that in warfare the Bini were cowardly in any way.

In Landolphe's time the King of Benin was still considered a considerable power. "He can raise 100,000 men in twenty-four hours. Although he has horses in his kingdom, mules only are used in warfare, because they are as indefatigable as easily nourished. The horsemen are armed with lances and pistols. As soon as the council has decided on war, the king transmits his orders direct to the captain-general, and if the commander does not know how to succeed, his head is cut off in expiation of his misfortune or inability" (II., p. 62). Beauvais says that not only can the

king put 100,000 men in the field, but he can impress as many of his subjects as he likes, or as circumstances may require (p. 143).

The captain of war was also a power in the land. A hall of the war captain's compound is described as "elegantly encrusted with cowries"; in another hall "forty feet long were several badly executed statues which were the representations of his ancestors, who had exercised the same functions as he did." (Landolphe, I., pp. 98, 99).

When Landolphe and his party arrived at the war captain's compound, "two large brass basins, nine feet [*sic*] in circumference, were brought in full of water in which slaves washed our feet, declaring that without this ceremony we could not see the captain general." They were told that the war captain, named Jabou [Ojoma] was the richest in the country, that his power equalled that of the king, that he possessed more than ten thousand slaves, which he never sold, and that going to war he always had fifty to sixty thousand men under him. (*ibid*, I., pp. 98, 100, 101).



FIG. 137.—Plaque representing a noble with curious helmet. British Museum.



FIG. 138.—Ivory Armlet, representing a soldier with bow. Height, 6in. (15.2 cm.) British Museum.

Fawckner (p. 81) speaks of the war captain thus: "We arrived at the house belonging to the captain of war, in the suburbs, and had an interview with him. On being ushered into his presence I was surprised to see a youth of about 16, seated on a stool in a large hall, and surrounded by a number of venerable chiefs, most of them four times his age. I afterwards found that his father, who held the situation, had recently been sent to conduct the war in the interior, and had fallen in battle; the office therefore devolved on the son, who is next in rank to the king. As soon as I entered, he approached me, and as a token of friendship presented some gooras [Kola nuts] in a long wooden box, beautifully carved and ornamented. I was then conducted to a smaller and more private apartment, where he ordered a glass of rum to be brought."

Burton's account goes more into details: "The abode of the Captain of War lies on the outskirts of the city, north-west by west of the palace, and a little off the high road of ingress. It is in the Ijebu quarter, or 'beach,' as the people here say. The house had the usual clay walls ribbed like corrugated iron, and was a complete Castle Rackrent in appearance. We passed through an external and very



shabby *atrium* into the reception-room, and were seated upon a mat spread in the deep alcove, which in Yoruba always occupies the head of the apartments. On our



FIG. 139.—Ornamental small portable powder keg?

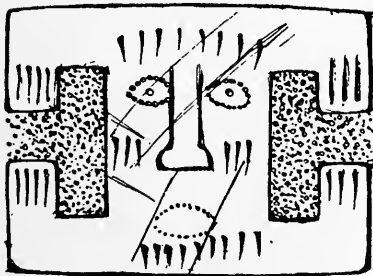


FIG. 140.—Ornamentation on side of fig. 139.

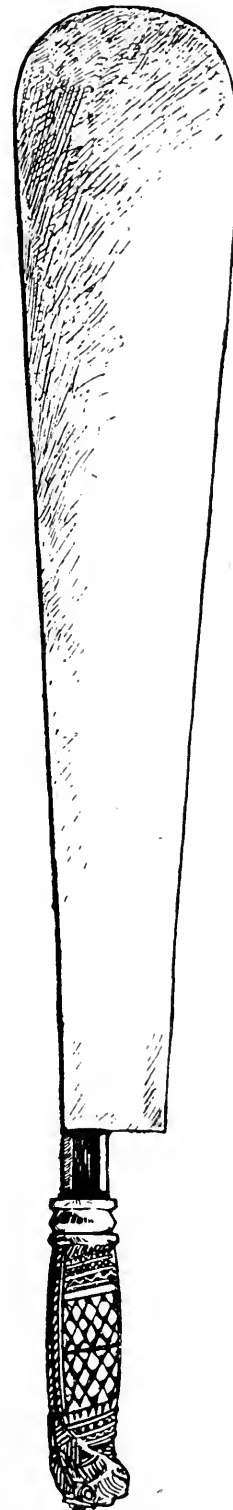


FIG. 141.—Knife of unusual shape for such a Benin made article. It is a copy of the large size butcher's knife, a common article of trade in Benin.

left was a similar but shallower niche, containing an altar and its furniture, and opposite it a raised earthbunk, upon which various attendants were clustered. . . .

He was standing in the upper alcove with two attendants gingerly supporting his coral and iron braceleted arms, which hung down loose and away from his sides. The general effect of his attitude upon a new comer was that of a fainting man being caught in the act of falling; in this case it was exaggerated by the mawkish and maudlin look of the warrior, who was at least 'half seas over.' . . . Presently the Captain of War, supported by his two arm-bearers, followed us and took his seat by our side. We now remarked his dress and figure. His forehead was adorned with a broad stripe of chalk from the hair to the nose-tip, and upon this was drawn a thin line of glazy clotted blood from a goat freshly sacrificed; a similar thin streak ran along the big toe of his right foot. He had evidently just been 'blooded' as stag-hunters say. His poll was shaven, whereas those around him wore their wool combed upwards and a little off the brow, not unlike the erected crest of a cockatoo. His back-hair was allowed to grow, and fastened at the place where women usually wear a comb, with leopards' claws and birds' quills of small size. His face was clean-shaven except under the chin, where there grew a few dwarf curls, like capers. His arms, which were soft and smooth, rejoiced in long lines of coral and polished iron-rings; and his dress was a large petticoat-like cloth, the head, bust and feet being entirely nude. His figure was that of a tall, well-proportioned man, perhaps thirty-two years old, of olivine colour; his features were sub-negro, and he had the fine long-lashed eyes general in this part of Africa. After the Captain sat down the ceremonies began. He keeps up an abundance of state, all knelt who approached him, and made low *congées* when addressed by him. A small rough stick in his left hand was repeatedly struck upon the ground, whilst he marshalled his dependants and expelled intruders. When Sawaye, who acted interpreter, had been seated close to our left upon a kind of settee with lock and padlock, a plate of kola nuts and squares of cocoa-nut was brought to the consul, who, according to custom, peeled one of the former with his nails, and splitting it into four pieces<sup>1</sup> handed a bit to all present. This rite is equivalent to eating bread and salt in Arabia. A square of cocoa-nut was then placed in each man's hand, and we were obliged to sip a glass of tombo, or palm-wine: it was too tart for our taste, and, indeed, nowhere in Benin did we find it equal to that of Gwato. Whilst this was going on, the Captain of War kept 'giving service,' which we punctually acknowledged, and, after often repeating 'Oyibo,' white man,<sup>2</sup> in his jollity he pulled the consul's beard, a compliment which was at once returned in kind. There was a general look about him which told of liquor far stronger than 'Pardon wine.' To show his geography, he inquired about the war at Liverpool; to prove his superiority he asked the consul what trade he came to make, a question of which the 'King Mouf' speedily and roughly disposed; and he informed us that he had washed our feet, a hint that he wanted us to wash his throat. . . . The Captain of War was waxing rude. He seized a chain and seals which one of the gentlemen had imprudently exposed, and seemed inclined to break it. This little freak nearly led to a scene." (pp. 285, 286, and 287).

Mr. C. Punch tells me that Nyendaël, Landolphe, Fawckner and Burton, all describe exactly Ojomo's house—which was afterwards destroyed by the British. The Ojomo in Mr. Punch's time did not drink, was a consumptive, and a most dignified person.

<sup>1</sup> "The kola nut usually divides into four cloves; sometimes it is found with five or six; these, however, are mostly used for fetish purposes"—R.B.

<sup>2</sup> "The language of Benin is said to be intelligible at Abeokuta and the Egbas generally; it must, then, belong to the Aku or Yoruba family"—R.B.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRADE, INDUSTRY, FARMING, FISHING & HUNTING

Early exports—Pepper sought by Portuguese—Tusks—Falling off of trade—Palm oil—Cloths—Cowrie money—D.R.'s. local markets—Goods for sale—Market women (132)—Dapper's local markets—Market restrictions—Settlement of market disputes—Dutch purchases (133)—Dutch imports—Landolphe's markets—Fawckner's markets (134)—Burton's poor opinion of the markets—Punch's markets—Restrictions on Europeans—Prohibition of women (135)—Arrival of a ship—Canoes 'lifted' under penalty of king's displeasure—Native houses taken for goods—Settling prices—Trading done by wives and slaves (136)—Fish trade—Mercantile civility—Entry dues hardly worth mentioning—Interpretors—Ceremonial bargaining—Heavy entry dues—List of prices fixed (137)—Prices of slaves and of ivory—Traders decline to pay heavy entry dues—Bold's list of prices (138)—The credit system (139)—Honesty of the merchants—The standard of exchange—Pagne v. Pawn—Cowries as currency (140). INDUSTRY—People not industrious—Cloth and mat making (141)—Looms—Value of Benin cloth—Tapestry made by king's 'boys'—Sizes of the cloths made—Dyeing—Tradition of the discovery of salt (142)—Methods of salt getting—Soap (143)—Coloured woods—Gold mines. FARMING—Slave work—The *Igba*—The Peppers. FISHING—Bini did not fish (144)—Fishing rights—Stupifying the fish—Fishing by line and in pools. HUNTING—Elephant hunting—Poisoned arrows—Poor results—A great hunter—His ability—Poaching not sport—Night shooting—Drives—Hunting dogs—Hunters a privileged class (145)—Apprentices—How not to get lost—Charms.

#### GENERAL TRADE

IN the chapter dealing with the history of the discovery of Benin, we have seen that pepper was one of the chief commodities sought for by the Portuguese. Windam reports obtaining 30 to 40 kintals of pepper at 1 cwt. per kintal, and he relates that "in case their merchandises would not extend to the value of so much pepper, the king promised to credit them to their next returne." Bird and Welsh got 94 bags and 28 elephants' tusks, but they had to wait for the pepper, "it not being ready, as in that king's reign no Christians had been to Benin." Evidently trade between the Europeans and Bini had fallen off. Welsh relates that the commodities he "brought home were pepper and elephants' teeth, oyle of palme, cloth made of cotton wool very curiously woven, and cloth made of the barke of palme trees. Their money is pretie white shels, for golde and silver we saw none They have good store of sope, and it smelleth like beaten violets. Also many pretie fine mats that they make, and spoones of elephants' teeth very curiously wrought with divers portions of foules and beasts made upon them."

We have however to go to the good old Dutch chronicler D. R. to get an idea of the trade as it was three hundred years ago. He says: "They also have special places where they hold various markets, for at one place they hold their great market day which they call *Dia de Ferro*, and at another place they hold their little market, called *Ferro*; to these places they bring all sorts of things to sell, such as live dogs, of which they eat many, roasted monkies, catfish (*meerkatse*), rats, parrots, fowls, yams, manigette pepper in pods or ears, dried lizards, palm oil, large beans, as well as

various sorts of fruits, vegetables, and animals fit for food. Much firewood and woodwork, such as dishes and drinking cups and other sorts are also brought to market for sale. Also much thread spun from cotton, of which they make their clothes, similar to those made on the Gold Coast, but lighter and finer, but to describe all would take too long. They also bring a great quantity of ironwork to sell there, such as implements for fishing, ploughing<sup>1</sup> and otherwise preparing the land. Similarly many weapons, such as javelins and others suitable for war and strife. These markets and traffickings are held and arranged in a very orderly manner, and everyone who comes to market with his wares or merchandise knows where to go and settle down with them, *i.e.*, at which place it is customary for an article to be sold. Women<sup>2</sup> are much employed as sellers, and even sent in mobs to the Gold Coast, as we have already mentioned."

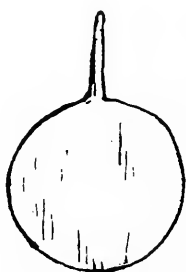


FIG. 142.—The blade a flat iron disc with a point,

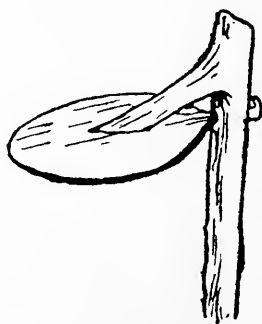


FIG. 143.—Side view

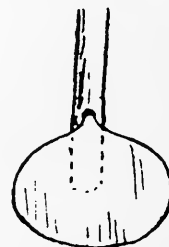


FIG. 144.  
Front view

FIGS. 142, 143 & 144.—Native hoe from a sketch by Mr. C. Punch. The blade is wrought and tempered by the village blacksmith. For the handle a small forked branch is obtained; one arm of the fork is left long and the other is cut short; a hole is burned into the long arm, and the point of the blade inserted in such a way that the flat back of the blade rests against the short arm as shown in fig. 143. The hoe when in use being always more or less drawn towards the user, the arrangement of the short arm keeps the blade in position.

From Dapper we learn that "Every three or four days there is also a market held at the village of Gotton, where the people from Great Benin, Arbon, and other places in the neighbourhood, come to market, where not only the above mentioned stuffs but also all sorts of food are offered for sale. Not everybody is allowed to bargain with the Dutch there, but only certain people whom the king licenses, and these buy the European goods from us and other white people in Arbon, and go and sell them again at Gotton. The inhabitants of the town of Benin trade among each other with their stuffs, made in the village or town of Koffe, situated at a day's journey from Great Benin; but no white men are allowed to go there. On the way between Gotton and the town of Benin, there are many large squares, supporting

<sup>1</sup> Of course D.R. uses the word to plough in its probable earlier sense of to thrust, and therefore he is speaking of a hoe and not of a plough.

<sup>2</sup> "They were mostly the Ugwini women, but all were equally dishonest, and apt to lure the Jekri men into trouble, so that their husbands or the Ukoba could have an excuse for swooping down and making what they called war" (C.P.)

busy markets on fixed days, where a great number of people from all the adjacent places assemble to trade with each other. All differences and quarrels occurring during the bargaining are brought before the nobles and settled; for the judges of those places have hardly any authority, and the nobles represent the king as long as they are there."

"The goods, which are bought by the Dutch and other nations on the Benin river, in exchange for our [European] native products, are cotton stuffs as in Rio Lagos, near Kuramo, jasper, slaves, but only women, for men are not allowed to be exported; leopard skins, some pepper and akori, which is a sort of blue coral, obtained from the bottom of the water by diving; for it grows like other coral, in the form of trees on stony ground under water. The Dutch export these akories (which the natives of the place make into coral beads) to the Gold Coast in order to sell them to the blacks, as the women wear them as an ornament in their hair" (Dapper).

The Dutch imports were :—

Gold and silver cloth,

Red cloth,

Kanetjes<sup>1</sup>; Little jugs, probably from *canajos*, painted red at one end;

All sorts of fine cotton cloths,

Linen,

Orange, lemon and green chalk beads,<sup>2</sup>

Red velvet,

Yellow copper bangles, each weighing five ounces and a half [old Dutch weight].

Lavender and violet-coloured camlet (*quispel-grein*).<sup>3</sup>

Coarse kersey [woollen stuffs],

Fine beads [? coral],

Harlem stuffs with large flowers [patterns] and stiffened,

Red glass ear-pendants,

Iron bars,

Gilt looking-glasses,

Crystals,

Boesjes, i.e., East Indian scallop-shells or cowries, used by the natives instead of money.<sup>4</sup>

"The large pieces of stuff, especially the striped ones, we sell again on the Gold Coast, where they are in demand; but the entirely blue ones are mostly in demand on the Gabun and Angola."

After a long interval we get a glimpse of marketing when European goods had already a considerable sale. Thus Landolphe mentions (II., 49): "Every day a market is held on a square a fourth of a league broad and nearly as long. It opens from 11 a.m. to 12 noon in order to allow time for people to arrive. All sorts of eatables are brought from the neighbourhood, European goods such as muslins

<sup>1</sup> Ogilby translates this "canvas striped with red at one end."

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch word used by Dapper is *paste*. Ogilby translates this "confection of oranges and lemons and other green fruits." These beads have always been a feature of Benin trade in which they are known as "seed beads" or chalk beads. They are quite small, and threaded and sold in packets costing about 2/- each.

<sup>3</sup> Ogilby has this, "Lavender and violet cotton seed."

<sup>4</sup> According to Ogilby. "East India little horns or shells."

Indiennes, Bretagne, English and Portuguese cloths, Cholet and silk kerchiefs, hats, knives, &c., as well as a large number of utensils made of iron and copper by the Bini."

Fawckner appears to speak of one market only, "which is a very large one, and the resort of natives in all parts of the country. At first sight it presented a busy and animated appearance; the ground on which it is held is a large plain, covered with temporary streets, each compartment formed by upright poles, and roofed with large mats. Underneath these sheds are exposed the different articles of merchandise, viz:—salt, black soap, yams, plantains, pins for the hair, of very rough manufacture, and various other articles" (p. 83).

Burton's party visited "the market in the Igosi quarter, with which we were disappointed; it was little larger than the small gathering under a tree in front of the palace. The people talk of one very large bazaar in the Akalwa quarter, distant

about two hours' march; probably the depressed state of the capital would prevent its maintaining such establishments as the chief cities of Yoruba can shew. There was nothing peculiar in the scene—a knot of men and women sitting and standing in the hot sun, bargaining and chaffering over the common country produce, beans and maize, kokos and plantains, fried fish fry<sup>1</sup> and shrimps, salt, red pepper, and similar comestibles. Cowries, the country currency, lay in every basket. Of these small places there are as many at Benin as at Abeokuta."

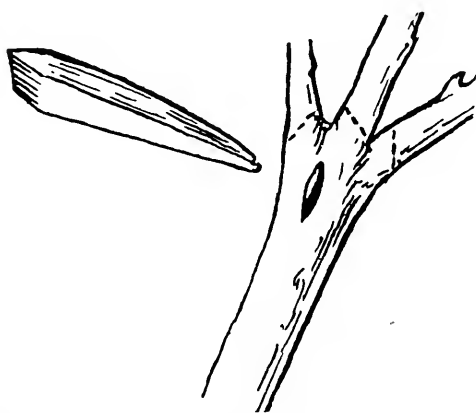


FIG. 145.—Native axe, from a sketch by Mr. Punch. A chisel-shaped piece of tempered iron is stuck into the enlarged portion of a branch close before the forks which are cut off. The hole is as usual burnt in. For choice one of the following woods is used: *Funtumia elastica*, *Baphia nitida*, and *Ebanus sericens*.

Lieut. King simply mentions "There are markets where all the produce of the country is exposed for sale."

"There were two places at which big markets have been held from time immemorial, both situated to the S. and S.E. of Benin City. There were probably others

on the other side of Benin City, while Gwato and other water-side places had small market days. Benin City had small market days, but these were not central. The two big markets were Igoro and Uruegi (see fig. 146). They were large clearings in the forest with only small villages adjacent. Here every five days the women congregated from all sides and did their exchanges, going from these to attend the smaller markets at the water-side places." (C. Punch).

So much for what we may call the home markets. "As regards the commerce of the foreigners with the natives," says Dapper, "that is carried on up the Benin river, near the village Gotton, where the Dutch go up in light boats and yachts, but not without the king's order. The king chooses some fiadors or state councillors, who alone are allowed to meet the Europeans, whom they call white men. For those who are ordered to serve in the time of war are absolutely forbidden to have intercourse with the white people, nay, they may not even enter their sheds, and still less

<sup>1</sup> "Dried fish of all sizes was a regular article of trade between the Jekri and Bini. Dried fish and salt were considered by the Jekri to be the most profitable goods to trade in" (C.P.)



buy European articles from them; but are bound to buy those articles at the highest prices from the above fiadors and merchants. On the other hand, no merchant or fiador is allowed to undertake anything connected with warfare, as everybody has to follow his own particular calling. Nor is any woman allowed to enter a shed of the Europeans, for such would be considered as something shameful.<sup>1</sup> When a ship with her cargo calls on this coast, a passador is sent to notify the king. The latter then sends two or three fiadors, accompanied by twenty or thirty *vailyes*, i.e., merchants,

in order to negotiate with the white men, who at once travel quickly by land from Benin to Gotton, providing themselves with as many canoes and paddlers as they want, which are taken away everywhere, although the owners themselves may want them. Whenever these owners object to this they are referred to the king, and asked whether they are not slaves to the king, and whether all their goods do not belong to the king, and they are ordered to be quiet under threat of being sent to the king's court. When all have arrived at Gotton or wherever else they have to be, they choose the best houses and dwellings, and place all their merchandise in them, without asking the owners' leave. Sometimes if one house is not roomy enough for them, they make the owner build another house near it, and use that also as their own, so that the owner often has no room for himself. The owner is likewise obliged to cook for them the first day without getting paid for it. When these fiadors come to the



FIG. 146.—Sketch Plan by Mr. C. Punch, to show the position of the important Igora and Uregi Markets.

sheds for the first time, they are in court dress, with jasper round their necks, and, kneeling down, they present the salutations from their king, and his mother and the greatest fiadors, in whose name they bring some eatables as a present, and pay many compliments, asking about the state of the visitors' country, and their wars against their enemies, and so on; after which they have drinks all round, and they leave without any reference to trade. The next day they come back, with the request

<sup>1</sup> He relates that at Warri, "women as well as men came without any fear of anybody to our sheds in order to trade there."

to view the new merchandise, which is then shown to them. The goods they have purchased on the previous visit retain their previously fixed prices; but for new goods new prices and tariffs are arranged, with which they are sometimes occupied whole months, bartering for as much as they can. As soon as the market prices have been agreed upon the trading proceeds."<sup>1</sup> On this Mr. Punch remarks: "To go to Benin was a serious undertaking, and to be sent there was tantamount to a death sentence. All this description of Dapper although of so long ago is excellent."

As we have seen elsewhere, according to Nyendael, the rich men leave their affairs to their wives and slaves, "who go to all the circumjacent villages to trade in all sorts of merchandizes, or otherwise serve for daily wages, and are obliged to bring the greatest part of their gain in trade or hire to their masters," while the ordinary citizens when they hear of any ships arriving in the river, go to trade, "and if no ships come, they send their slaves to Rios Lagos, or other places, to buy fish, of which they make a very profitable trade further inland." He tells us too that "the Europeans are here extraordinarily civilly treated; for the customs which we are obliged to pay for every ship to the king, the great lords, the governors of the place where we trade, the *mercadores* and *fiadors*, or whatever persons else who have any demand upon us, do not amount to above six pounds sterling; for which we become entirely free to trade." Nyendael also states: "On our arrival here we are obliged to pay some sort of customs to these brokers and the governors, which are so inconsiderable, that they are hardly worth mentioning."<sup>2</sup> . . . The persons who treat with us on their behalf are such as are thereto appointed by the governors, and are called by the above mentioned names of *mercadores* and *fiadors*, and these are the only merchants with whom we deal. This custom has arisen from the fact that these factors can speak a miserable sort of Portuguese, which qualifies them to talk with us. This is their only virtue, without which they would be looked upon as the very scum of their countrymen, and not thought worthy a name amongst them."

Landolphe thus describes the custom of fixing prices for the markets. "The day after my arrival at Gwato, two *passadors* arrived from Benin in order to instruct me that I must declare all the goods I had on board, and to inform me that in two days' time forty *fiadors* would come from the city as overseers to value every article; that the price being once established I would not be allowed to increase it, and that such settlement would serve as the basis for meeting the rights of entry, according to custom which existed in favour of the king and the big men of his kingdom. The rights are as follows: a three-masted ship pays 15,000 francs, a two-masted vessel is freed by payment of two-thirds of this sum, and a single-masted ship pays much

<sup>1</sup> Regarding Warri, "the Dutch come to trade into the Forkado river, importing the same goods as they do to Benin, in order to exchange them for slaves, for here the best and strongest slaves are to be got to the number four hundred or more every year, and jasper and akori (beads), but these last-mentioned articles only in small quantities. The natives are very careful with these articles, barely willing to sell them except above their value. These blacks are not good-natured and calm traders; they will barter days and months in order to buy the goods at a low price. Then they keep the price at that level, in which circumstance they are pretty much like the Benin people." (Dapper).

<sup>2</sup> "Our Dutch friend of old seems to have found the *fiadors*, &c., rather useful people and easily satisfied. I soon found in trading that I was dealing with a regular spider's web of old customs, and with ways which were no doubt useful in their time, but which in 1889 were an unmitigated nuisance. The king himself was not extortionate nor unreasonable, but the governors must have entirely fallen from grace since the time of my Dutch predecessor" (C.P.)

less. The following is the tariff for a three-masted vessel, with the rank of the people who receive it, in *pagnes*—money worth two francs (*monnaie de deux francs*):

The king	900	pagnes	...	...	1800	francs.
The war captain general	300	"	...	...	600	"
Twenty 'big men', each	100	"	...	...	4000	"
Forty fiadors, each	20	"	...	...	1600	"
Six saladors [interpreters], each	20	"	...	...	240	"
Forty carcadors [sort of porter], each	10	"	...	...	800	"
Three Gwato fiadors, each	20	"	...	...	120	"
Various gifts which amount to close on			...	...	6000	"

Total ... .. 15160 francs.

"The forty fiadors having arrived, they came to my office and said to me 'You must give us each a glass of brandy and a pipe and *brasse* [fathom] of tobacco. While we smoke you shall place into three very large copper basons all the merchandise you have brought in La Negresse [the ship]. We will fix the prices which shall be credited you in trading for blacks [slaves]. We also caution you that you are not allowed to increase any prices fixed by the assembly under pain of having your trade stopped.' I had, of course, the same rights as to the prices for slaves which I was establishing. After I had exposed my goods piece by piece in the basons, they took a

Cholet kerchief which was valued at	...	...	...	...	12	pagnes.
Then 1 piece Nîmes silk kerchiefs	...	...	...	...	12	"
$\frac{1}{2}$ piece chintz indienne, 7 ells	...	...	...	...	7	"
1 " Bretagne cloth, 5 ells	...	...	...	...	4	"
1 " Rouen cotton, 6 ells	...	...	...	...	6	"
1 " Surat fine muslin ( <i>bafetas</i> ), 5 ells	...	...	...	...	6	"
1 " Cholet dress cloth, 6 ells	...	...	...	...	6	"
1 " Nîmes silk-satin, half silk, half thread, 6 ells	...	...	...	...	6	"
1 " Indian chintz (Perse des Indes), 5 ells	...	...	...	...	10	"
1 role of Brazil smoking tobacco	...	...	...	...	20	"
$\frac{1}{2}$ " " "	...	...	...	...	10	"
1 brass bason, 3 feet in diameter	...	...	...	...	7	"
1 " 2 " "	...	...	...	...	4	"
1 improved foot soldier's gun	...	...	...	...	7	"
1 " dragoon horse pistol	...	...	...	...	4	"
1 " sabre	...	...	...	...	1	"
1 barrel of powder, 5 lbs.	...	...	...	...	5	"
100 gun flints	...	...	...	...	1	"
6 Flemish knives, <sup>1</sup> painted, in gayacum wood handles	...	...	...	...	2	"
1 case containing a pair of scissors, a razor, and a small piece of slate (whetstone)	...	...	...	...	1	"
1 common hat, edged with red wool	...	...	...	...	1	"
1 barrel of brandy, 20 pints	...	...	...	...	8	"
1 liquor case with 12 flagons of $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints each	...	...	...	...	8	"
1 bar of iron, 7 feet long, 3 inches wide	...	...	...	...	3	"
1 necklace of coral, 40 francs per lb.	...	...	...	...	8	"

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Landolphe mentions that the "natives do not like clasp knives; they all carry their knives at their sides in leather sheaths, which they make themselves." (I., p. 124).

I	„	round coral, the size of rosary beads, 60 francs per	
		lb. ... ..	8 „
I	„	small coral, consisting of 12 little strings...	5 „

When they had finished their valuations they fired off several guns in order to inform me that trade was now open to me. Then a slave man and a woman were brought in. The fiadors fixed the price of the man, who was well made and without defects, at 120 pagnes, and the woman at 100 pagnes. But I objected to these valuations, and after long discussions it was agreed I should pay 100 pagnes for a fine man, and 90 pagnes for a fine woman. I purchased the first two individuals at these prices, which were converted into an assortment of various goods, according to the valuations which I have just mentioned. Trade went ahead: fifteen to eighteen men [slaves] passed daily on board, so that in three months time I had completed my cargo, which constituted of four hundred and ten blacks of both sexes, and sixty thousand pounds of ivory of various lengths and thicknesses. I paid for the ivory ten sous (five pence) a pound when the tusks weighed less than twenty pounds, but fifteen or twenty sous (seven pence half-penny to ten pence) when they exceeded this weight" (I., pp. 124-129).

"In later times the king would tell the European traders what was expected of them, and begin with a long list of what was to be given to the various officials, but conditions were altered and the traders declined to pay the high price demanded for right of entry" (C. Punch).

Another very interesting account of the method of trading is from the pen of Lieut. Bold, and is as follows. "The measures principally in use are the oil jars which are of two sorts, the largest containing about four gallons, and the smallest not quite three; for powder a small half-pint mug, and for salt a mess kid, or crew, made to contain five pounds. There is a difference to be observed in the payment for the oil to the king, who has one and a half pawn for the large jars, and one pawn for the smallest, whilst the people only receive one for the former, and two pawns for three of the latter.

#### Pawns.

1.	All handkerchiefs.
1.	Long cloths per yard.
1.	Two crews of salt.
2 to 3.	Iron bars.
15 to 20.	Neptunes.
1.	Two quart jugs.
3.	Trade hats.
10 to 12.	Fine hats
8.	Guns, short French banded.
4.	Rum, per gallon.
2.	Brass pans.
	Coral pipe beads.
	Cowries.
1.	Looking-glasses.
	Manillas.
1.	Copper rods, two.
2.	Ginghams.
	White bafts, a few desirable.
2.	Bandanoes, each handkerchief.
	A few copper rods.

"The large jars contain about 28lbs. of oil, and the small ones 20. On entering the river, vessels are boarded by the two governors of Bobee and New Town, with whom you send up a deputy to treat with the King of Warree, accompanied with the following comey or custom, which he must receive previous to opening trade. Thirty pieces of the most common cloth, six guns, one barrel of powder, a small cask of rum, and a few other small articles. The same form is necessary for the King of Benin, if you wish to purchase ivory, which is the principal produce of his dominions, and may be had in great abundance, at the rate of three pounds for two pawns, or at most one pawn per pound, for which they take in exchange a quantity of salt with other articles. The governors above mentioned ought much to be mistrusted and guarded against; at the same time, as representatives of the king, who never comes to the river, they must be humoured and encouraged, for their power is very great and almost uncontrolled" (The Merchants' and Mariners' African Guide, London, 1841).

Credit was evidently allowed from the first intercourse with Europeans. Windam mentions that the king offered him credit, and Dapper informs us "The Portuguese formerly always sold to them on credit, but the Dutch have never liked to do so. In the beginning, this did not suit the natives, but now it has been made customary, so the natives bring their slaves as they come to fetch the merchandise." However, this may be, Nyendaël complains very much of the long credit which had to be given. He says: "The worst of all is, that the native traders are very tedious in dealing. Many times they have a stock of elephants' tusks by them, for which we have generally to wait eight or ten days before we can agree upon a price with them; but this is managed with so many ceremonious civilities, that it is impossible to be angry with them. Another inconvenience, which really deserves complaint is, that on our arrival here, we are obliged to trust them with goods to make *paans* or clothes of; for the payment of which we frequently stay so long, that, on account of the advance of the season, the consumption of our provisions, and the sickness or mortality of our men, we are obliged to depart without our money; but on the other hand, the next time we come hither, we are sure to be honestly paid the whole." The credit system is spoken of by Roupell's officials and is still in vogue.

Perhaps the best testimony to the trading instinct of the African native is his adoption of a standard of value for exchange purposes, and by which, as we have seen above, all trade was regulated. In Benin this standard was the pawn. The origin or meaning of the word is doubtful. Burton thought that it probably was a "corruption of the old French *pagne*, a loincloth," but Nyendaël mentions the word *panen* or clothes, and that was before the advent of the French. Landolphe speaks of *pagnes*, and the French dictionaries I have consulted explain it as the name of an Indian loincloth. Capt. Hugh Crow describes it, using the word *paan*, on one occasion as a sash which serves for a waistcloth, and on another occasion as a mantle (Memoirs, London, 1830, pp. 192 and 275). Although a standard, the purchasing price of the pawn evidently and naturally varied. Landolphe put it at two francs (one shilling and eightpence), at a bar in Bonny, or two shillings and sixpence, while Burton gives the following tariff, which is, however, not clear.

250	cowries	= 1 pawn, i.e.,	3d. to 6d.
1250	"	= 1 cloth, i.e.,	
18000	"	= 1 bag.	

In 1840, the pawn was worth from 2/- to 3/-. On this Mr. Punch remarks: "*Pagnes v. Pawns*: I think there is some confusion here. *Pagne* which is prob-

ably from the Portuguese *pano* became later *pangs*, which is the name of the red and blue country cloth mixed with silk, imitations of which were introduced from Manchester but were not equal to the native made article. *Pawn* I should perhaps trace to *palma*, the palm of the hand. It was the name for a hand of tobacco = 5 heads;  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pawns = 12 heads of tobacco = 1 pang of cloth."

Frequent references have been made to the use of cowries as a medium of exchange. As Welsh has it, "Their money is pretie white shels, for golde and silver we saw none." Dapper likewise mentioned them, and Lieut. Bold says: "The small East-India shell, or cowry, constitutes the currency of the country." In Adams' time the cowrie shells were "brought to Europe from the Maldive Islands, in the East Indies, and are always in great demand at Wydah, Ardrah and Lagos, at which places they are not only the medium of exchange, but from whence they are also sent to Dahomey, Hio [? Eyo], Housa, Jaboo, and into the very heart of North Africa, where it is known they are the circulating currency."<sup>1</sup> From a further remark he makes it would appear that in his time there was no demand for them in Bonny, Calabar, Camerons, or the Congo. He says they sell in England from £40 to £80 per ton. This was about eighty years ago. (pp. 263-4). Mr. C. Punch informs me that in his time Messrs. Stuart & Douglas used to bring them in shiploads from the Malabar Coast and East Africa to Benin river and Lagos.<sup>2</sup> Cowries were, however, not used merely as a currency, but found a place in adorning the mud walls of the houses, and were made up into a variety of objects.

#### INDUSTRY.

The records of any real industry beyond weaving and mat making are meagre, and if we had not proofs in the wood and ivory carvings and in the bronze castings, we should have a poor opinion of the people in so far as their success in the arts and crafts are concerned. Nyendaël states that of the people very few are "laborious or industrious, unless it be those who are wretchedly poor; the others laying the whole burthen of their work on their wives and slaves, whether it be tilling the ground, spinning of cotton, weaving of cloths, or any other handicraft; whilst they, if they have but the least stock, apply themselves to merchanting alone." According to this traveller, "There are very few manual arts practised or understood here besides weaving. The chief workmen here are either smiths, carpenters, or leather dressers; but all their workmanship is so very crude that a boy who has been one month learning in Europe would outdo them." On the other hand, the records contain numerous references to the cloths and mats made by the Bini. Welsh relates, "they have a great store of cotton growing," and speaks of the "pretie fine mats that they make." Indeed the mat making and cloth weaving industries were by no means small. D. R. talks of "also much thread spun from cotton, of which they make their clothes similar to those on the Gold Coast, but lighter and finer." Dapper tells us, "cotton

<sup>1</sup> In a note in "Nature" on the discovery of African money cowrie (*Cypræa moneta*) in the barrow caves of Pomerania, it is stated some 27 were found "in an earthen vase mixed with earth and sand, each one being notched so as to permit its being arranged with others upon a string. Wagner is of opinion that these shells must have been brought by the Phœnicians for the purpose of bartering with the people for amber. A closely allied species, *C. pantherina*, was found in graves in Swabia, which could not in any way be associated with Phœnicians. Jeitteles also mentions the occurrence among certain prehistoric objects found near Olmutz, of a coral from the Indian Ocean found very rarely in the Mediterranean."

<sup>2</sup> "The Jekri word for Cowrie is *Ogo*; the Yoruba word *Owo*, which also means our word money; an engineer friend from Brazil tells me the negroes used to say *Owo kosi*, which is Yoruba for 'There is no money'" (C.P.)



grows everywhere in great abundance, and very well. The natives make cloth out of it." Similar evidence is given by Nyendael: "That a large quantity of cotton bushes must grow here you may reasonably conjecture when I tell you that not only all the inhabitants are clothed with it, but they annually export thousands of woven clothes to other places." According to Landolphe: "Few houses are to be seen without a cotton spinning machine, or a frame for making admirable cotton or straw rugs (mats). This loom, similar to that of our weavers, is however perpendicular instead of being horizontal like the latter." (II., p. 49). Lieut. King mentions mats and woollen [*sic*] stuffs made in the country spread over the bench, round the wall, and on the ground, during his interview with the king.

Fawckner (p. 36) at Yarcella, on his way to Benin, speaks of "a large hall hung with the most superb cloths of the country, like tapestry." He also says, "the women appear to be very clever at weaving by hand mats of a fibrous wood." From Moffatt and Smith we gather that cotton is indigenous in Benin, and is spun there and woven into cloth by women.

Burton mentions (p. 409) that "they make their own cottons, and are independent of Manchester." Elsewhere (p. 415) he refers to "large Benin pipes, and fine cotton work, open and decorated with red worsted—a work confined to the ladies of the palace."

That the Benin cloth must have had considerable value we may conclude from a remark of Captain Crow, who, as a bribe, was once offered by King Pepple of Bonny a "beautiful Benin cloth," after Crow had refused to accept a tusk weighing over one hundred pounds (p. 97). Labarthe, while speaking of the Wydah cloths, mentions parenthetically that those of Benin are more beautiful (p. 159). What specially beautiful cloths are referred to by Crow and Labarthe it is not now possible to ascertain, but possibly they may refer to the needlework tapestry about which Mr. C. Punch writes me that "they were in pieces perhaps six feet long or more, with life sized figures worked with a needle on the open work cotton material. They were made by the king's 'boys.'"

"The above-mentioned pieces of cloth, called by the natives *mouponoqua*<sup>1</sup> and by the Europeans Benin-cloth, are of cotton, blue throughout, or alternate white and blue, made of four strips sewn together lengthwise, two ells and a half, and two ells and three-quarters long, with a complete breadth of two ells.<sup>2</sup> There are also small pieces of cloth, being in size about one-third of a large one, and called by them *ambasis*. All these pieces of cloth are either made there or elsewhere and brought there for sale." (Dapper). Landolphe received some "beautifully native-made cotton mats and pagnes, made of very fine grasses. The work of the mats surprised me considerably, quite as much by the beautiful colours as by the regularity of the weft. They were of three sizes, each a third of an ell wide and eight feet long. The nankeen coloured grass mats, almost equalling silk in fineness, consisted of four strips, each a third of an ell broad and eight or nine feet long" (I., p. 121). On another occasion he says, "their pagnes have a breadth of an ell and a third," so that if the travellers are correct in their measurements the cloths must have been made of various sizes. As to the dyeing, "the inhabitants are very well skilled in making several sorts of dyes, as green, blue, black, red and yellow. The blue they prepare from indigo, which grows here abundantly; but the remaining colours are extracted

<sup>1</sup> "The word *Oupon* (cloth) is in use by the Bini at the present day" (C. P.)

<sup>2</sup> Ogilby omits this.

from certain trees by friction and decoction." (Nyendaël). According to Beauvais (Flore II., p. 44) it is probably "with the colouring matter of the *Indigofera endecaphylla* that the natives dye their cotton," and Landolphe adds, "they are fast-dyed in various colours, abundantly produced in the country." (II., p. 49). Mr. Punch, however, tells me the "Benin indigo dye is from the same plant as that in the Lagos country, which is not *Indigofera* sp. but *Lonchocarpus sericeus*. Several trees are burnt to get a salt for fixing the country dyes, in Lagos especially were used Arere, an unnamed species of *Sterculia*, Akika (*Spondias lutea*), Mangrove and others, especially several species of *Albizzia*. For their mats the "natives of Warri and Benin make use of the *Hypoelytrum nemorum*, as they do of various galingales (*Cyperus*), to manufacture thread. Their mode of doing this is very simple; they twist the fibres by rolling them on their knees several times until the fibres remain twisted without untwisting themselves." Beauvais (Flore II., p. 13).

According to Roupell's officials, King Osogboa is credited with discovering salt in the Jekri country. The salt is much prized, and for cooking yams is preferred to



Fig. 147. Bronze plaque showing individuals carrying manillas in their hands: these articles have, however, long ceased to exist as currency or as an article of trade in Benin. British Museum.

European salt. It is obtained by burning the young branches of the salt bush which grows near salt water, the rain washes the ashes, which are collected and washed again. The country famous for this salt bush is what was formerly owned by chief Nana of Brohoemi; there is considerable competition among the Benin river chiefs for this land, as its possession means a valuable monopoly. Fawckner on his way from the coast to Benin (p. 23) did not see the process of making salt, "but remarked a quantity of baskets formed from the rind of the bamboo, which were suspended over earthen vessels or calabashes. They contained sand and dirty water, which filtered through into the calabash below. I concluded from this that they were not able to get pure salt water, as the water near the shore, in consequence of the constant surf, becomes very foul and muddy." Salt making or obtaining is, however, a fairly common industry. Adams, who says salt is a medium of exchange (p. 116), mentions the industry (p. 118), but the exact locality he describes is not clear, perhaps it

would appear to be in the Ijo country. "On the west head of the river, as well as on the opposite shore a number of huts have been erected, where salt is made from sea water. At full tide, the sea approaches very near to these huts, at which time the natives fill the vessels, composed chiefly of earthenware of native manufacture, with salt water, and evaporate it by the fire. Some of the salt made in this way is very good, but a large portion of it is a bad colour, and sandy." At Warri, he tells us slaves are sold for large brass pans called neptunes, and "these neptunes are used, during the dry season, by the Creek and surrounding country people, for the purpose of evaporating sea-water to obtain its salt, which is here the medium of exchange, and a great trade is carried on in this article with the interior country" (p. 122). Burton, on the Tebbu river, met with a settlement where the principal industry seemed to be "the collecting of salt from

mangrove ashes, strained, boiled in iron cauldrons, and stored in large baskets of bamboo splints. Before use, it is evaporated in earthen pots till crystals develop themselves. The taste is offensively bitter, like bad gunpowder; still the people put up with it" (p. 274). The following is Mr. C. Punch's account of salt making. "The salt was made from the salt bush (*Avicennia* sp.) It is often taken for mangrove. When the mangrove is cut down, the avicennia grows, but the Jekri, especially Nana's people, used to plant out sets. It is called white mangrove in Brazil, but it is no mangrove (*Rhizophora* sp.). The avicennia bushes are cut in the dry season, December and January, ashes collected, and put in the large wicker cone-shaped baskets described, and water allowed to filter through. The water with the salt in solution is then boiled in earthen pots, and the salt precipitated forms blocks shaped like the earthen pots. These are broken up and filled into the long thin baskets, made from the split leaves of the Pandanus or screw pine. These long baskets are, or were, the salt measure for trade in Benin, and I met them again last year as far north as the Idanre mountains in the Lagos Colony."

So far back as Welch's time soap was in use: "They have a good store of sope and it smelleth like beaten violets." So too Nyendaël: "The negroes here make soap, which is better than that all over Guinea; and as this washes very well, the negroes clothes are very clean. You know it is made upon the Gold Coast with palm oil, banana leaves, and the ashes of a sort of wood. The manner of making it here differs very little."

Amongst exports, Landolphe (I., pp. 51, 101) speaks of red, blue, violet and yellow woods, copal and palm oil, besides, of course, slaves, ivory and cotton cloths or mats (*tapis*). Of the coloured woods he adds, "I have spoken of red, blue, violet and yellow woods; but when they are cut they are all white, like ordinary timber; it is only when placed in water that their brilliant and fast colours are to be seen." (II., p. 71).

Landolphe reported the existence of gold mines in Benin, but states, "no one is allowed to touch them under pain of death, for fear lest Europeans should in their avarice bring fire and sword as they did into Peru." (II., p. 71).

#### FARMING.

"The cultivation of the farms was of the usual 'go as you please' style prevalent in West Africa. The slaves found their own food, and had certain days in the week as their own time to work at their own farms. There is a recognised task for slave work, viz.: 200 yam heaps of 3 feet by 3 feet to be weeded in a day, and the word *igba* (=200) is fast becoming a land measure, just as our measure called furlong originated in a day's work of ploughing." (C. Punch).

The frequent references to pepper call for some comment, D.R. calls it *manigette* pepper, the common negro name being *alligator* pepper, but it is a spice not a pepper and is related to the Cardamums. There are three genera of *Scitamineae* very similar in appearance, whose fruits are used by the natives. The *Amomum paradisici* is the pepper or spice of the old chroniclers, and one species is sucked by the natives for the sake of the sweet tasting mucilage surrounding the seed. The commonly distributed *Sola fruticosum*, often said to be the original pepper of the Portuguese, is introduced.

#### FISHING.

Fawckner mentions (p. 49) "Wicker fish pots fastened to the bank of the river for catching prawns or shrimps. At high tide the water overflowed them, and thus

the fish became taken, which, after being smoked were sent to Benin market." According to Burton, "the mouth of every little creek shews a weir or a crate. In the months of August and September, when the rains are heaviest, old wives may be seen fishing with bamboo baskets. The fry is sun-dried or smoked, packed in panniers, and sent up the country to fetch a profit of 200 per cent" (p. 144). See pp. 134 and 136, *supra*.

Fishing was not practiced by the Bini. It was against their fetish to go on big water, and the fishing was left to the Ijos and Jekries. In the Egba country fishing grounds are owned; reaches of the Ogun are family property, following the usual customs of inheritance, but although, as far as I could learn, they could not be sold; they could be and often were pawned. The proprietary rights only covered the annual big fishing, when the piece of water was rounded up with bamboo nets and the fish were stupefied by means of a certain fruit, and all the family lent a hand and shared in the take. Fishing by line was open to all, and pools in the forest left from high water were also common to all" (C. Punch).

### HUNTING.

"THE elephant hunters were a special class and were highly esteemed. Elephants were shot with poisoned darts fired from the ordinary "Long Dane" gun. The poison was carried in long-necked gourds, and the darts were kept in the poison until the moment of firing. The poison was made from seeds of *Strophanthus* mixed with other things. It was not immediately fatal, though a mere scratch was sufficient to kill eventually. The wounded animal was tracked for two or three days till it fell. The tooth which first touched ground was king's property, the other belonged to the hunter, but the king could buy it at his own price. The elephants were in herds, which visited different parts of the country at intervals. While I was at Guatun a herd came into the neighbouring forest, but there had been none in that part for more than three years; news of their arrival was carried to the king, and he sent two hunters to Guatun to hunt. They remained for about ten days at Guatun, being feasted, and also performing many ceremonies. Eventually one small elephant was killed in the forest about five miles from Gwato; the tusks were taken to Benin and the meat was consumed in Gwato for some time after. The herd then moved on and the hunters went away. Last year I met an old hunter named Gangan on the Ofosho river not far from Benin. I spent some time in the forest with him and had long talks with him. He claimed to have been at one time a hunter of elephants for the King of Benin and to have killed with his Long Dane 200 elephants. He was certainly very expert at his work. He said it was quite impossible for him to be really lost in the forest, and that he could easily go four or five days in the forest without taking any food. He could live on certain of the fruits and roots, and showed me some of the fruits which he said would support life. We were making our way through the forest and he suddenly stopped short and said Guinea fowl were close. He dived off into the forest, and almost immediately I heard his gun and he returned with a Guinea fowl. Then he showed me a plant with red berries, some of which, fallen on the ground, showed him that Guinea fowl had been interrupted feeding. After this he went off by himself and I heard him calling the birds. They answered and he finally bagged another. In the same way the hunters have a call for the deer, though I believe they are not properly deer. As a rule the hunters trust more to poaching than to fair sport. They clear a space in a part where

they see the animals' tracks and spread the fruits of the raphia palm and other fruits liked by the animals. Then they construct a place for themselves to sit overlooking the spot. They erect a small scaffold on a tree, something like a saddle-tree, and sit astride on moonlit nights waiting for the game. From their seats they can see and shoot in either direction, and simply poach the beasts as they feed. The Jekri and Sobos arrange big drives. They select a spot where a river forms a loop and throw a line of beaters across the neck, and then beat down to the river while other sportsmen in canoes wait for the beasts. They have very good hunting dogs, which, however, do not retrieve. The Egbas in the open country organise big drives with beaters and dogs. The hunters are a privileged class, and the Yorubas have a saying that the towns and farms belong to the chiefs but the forest belongs to the hunters. They are a distinct professional class, and are used by the chiefs as soldiers and police. A boy is apprenticed to a hunter and learns the business. The hunter teaches him woodcraft, how to find his way about, etc. The hunters have also rites and fetishes, which are supposed to make them invisible to the animals and also to preserve them from being lost. In making their way through the forest they cut small twigs as they pass, bending the half-cut twig in certain ways to denote directions, so that they know if they are traversing the same ground. The guns, as one may suppose, are covered with charms. A hunter will never, if he can help it, sell the head and lights and heart. They use them for fetish purposes connected with their profession" (C. Punch).

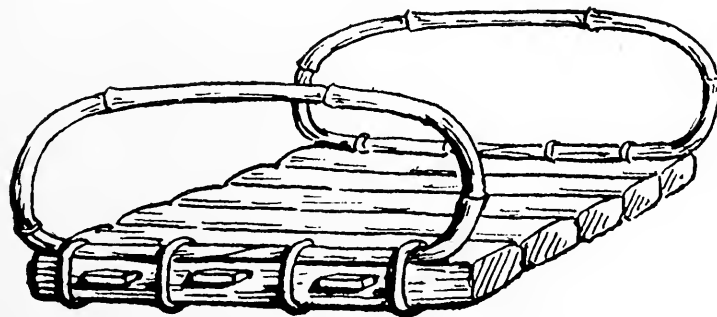


FIG. 148.—Tray used by the Bini market women. From a sketch by Mr. C. Punch. The body was made of pieces of the midrib of the *raphia* palm, and the sides composed of stout pieces of *Calamus*. The sides were movable and could be turned down flat on top. The *raphia* midribs were kept in position by pieces of harder outside layers driven right through. These trays were carried by the women on their heads.



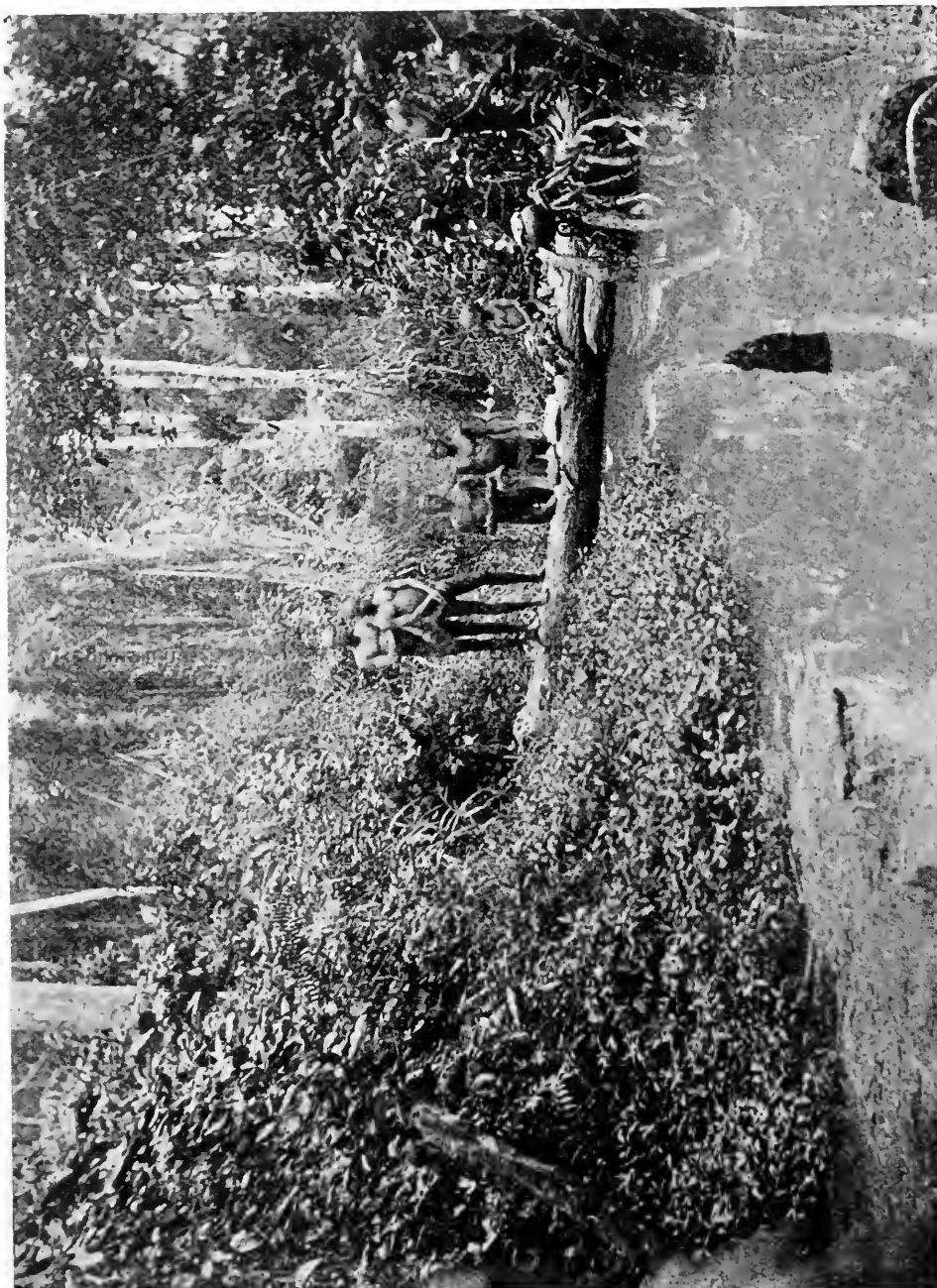


FIG. 149—Oboba. Stream of water from which the residents of Benin City obtained their water supply. From a photograph taken by Mr. C. Punch, Dec. 1890.



## CHAPTER XIV

### FOOD, DOMESTIC ANIMALS, FERMENTED DRINKS, WATER

Variety of fruits—Milbio—Potatoes and Yams—Beans—Rice—Fertile Soil—Maize or Guinea Corn—Meats and fish of rich and poor—Salt fish—Cray fish—Kola nut—Fu fu—Monkey's flesh—Horses, poultry, dogs, donkeys, sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle eaten—Small breed of horses—Why horses do not thrive—Palm Wine—Vino de Palm and Vino de Bordon—Milbio Beer—Accidents in obtaining the palm wine—Water from Oboba creek.

"THEY have many excellent fruits," says D.R., "upon which they live well, such as yams, batatas, bananas, pomegranates, lemons, &c." Dapper too found "here nearly all sorts of fruit, also oranges and lemons, especially on the road between Gotton and the town of Benin. They grow in this country a kind of pepper, called by the Dutch Benin pepper, but there is no great abundance of it. It grows just like the East Indian pepper, but its grain is smaller." This pepper, as we have seen, is, however, not the same as the East Indian variety, but a Cardamum. According to Nyendael, "The fruits of the earth are corn, or great milbio; for they have none of the small sort. The large milbio is here cheap, but they do not esteem it; consequently little is sown, which nevertheless yields an enormous quantity of grain, and grows very luxuriantly. Potatoes [?sweet potatoes] are scarce, but there is great abundance of yams which forms their main diet. They eat them instead of bread with all sorts of food, so that they are very careful that this fruit be planted and gathered in its proper season. There are two sorts of beans, both of which are very like horse-beans. They are of a hot disagreeable taste, and are unwholesome. I never saw any rice here, nor do I believe any grows in Benin, although the swampy land near the river seems very suitable for its growth. The arboriferous fruits of Benin are of two sorts of coco-nuts, cormantyn-apples, paquovens, bananas, wild figs, and some others, which are peculiar to this part of the country, and have nothing extraordinary about them. The soil at some distance from the river, is extraordinarily fertile; and whatever is planted or sown there grows very well and yields a rich crop. But close by the river the land is not good, for although what is sown comes up, yet the close proximity of the moisture from the river kills it."

"There is a question as to whether Nyendael, speaking of great milbio, refers to Indian corn (maize) or millet (Guinea corn). The cultivation of these two is local, but broadly speaking, maize is grown on cleared forest land while millet thrives best in open country. Benin is at present mostly forest, but owing to the slow decay of the city the surrounding country may now be covered with forest while formerly it was more open." (C. Punch.)

"Generally speaking, the natives, if possessed of any riches, eat and drink very well; that is to say, of the best. The common diet of the rich is beef, mutton, or

chicken, with yams, which take the place of bread; these they boil and beat very fine in order to make cakes of them. They frequently treat one another, and distribute a portion of their over-abundance to the needy" (Nyendaël). The meaner people, whose bread is also yams, bananas, and beans, eat fish (*ibid*).

Dapper, while referring to crocodiles, hippopotami, and electrical fish, presumably in Benin River,<sup>1</sup> remarks that there are also many edible and palatable fish, but Nyendaël says the upper part of the river "is not well stocked with fish; all that they eat here coming from a place called Boca de la Mare, or the mouth of the sea, where they are dried and smoked; but most of it, not being salted, tastes nasty and stinks abominably." He also tells us that the meaner sort of people content "themselves with smoked or dried fish, which, if salted, is very like what we in Europe call *raf* or *reeked*" [? smoked]. "At Gwato there are excellent crayfish." (C. Punch).

"Apart from its ceremonial use, *Sterculia acuminata*—kola nut, is eaten by the blacks in order to make taste as nice whatever is eaten or drunk after eating of the nut, the effects of which are quickly dissipated; bad water especially tastes sweet after partaking of kola nut" Beauvais (*Flore*).

Fawckner (p. 36) on one occasion speaks of a "quantity of bowls, containing 'fu-fu,' a sort of dumpling, made of pounded yams. This 'fu-fu' they eat with a rich soup made from the fore legs of monkeys, and occasionally with fish. It is esteemed by them a dainty dish; but being so highly seasoned with their strong pepper, few Europeans can touch it." He also tells us a quantity of monkeys' flesh attracted his "attention, from the paws and nails which were exposed; and dogs, goats, and sheep were here in abundance." (p. 84). Elsewhere (p. 34) he speaks of boiled fowls and yams served in a wash-hand bason, when shells were used for spoons. Dapper speaks "of horses, poultry, donkeys, goats, sheep having no wool but hair on their bodies, standing on long legs, and affording good meat." "The land about the town of Benin is fertile, although but little of it is cultivated. Sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, and yams are plentiful and cheap. There is here also a breed of small cattle." (Adams). And the Punitive Expedition found plenty of "an excellent class of beast, black and white, smaller than our English cattle, but compact, with deep set short horns, which was excellent meat." (Bacon, p. 97).

## HORSES.

D.R. tells us "Their horses are, however, very small, and not much larger than our calves at home, which is the reason that our horses are so much honoured and esteemed." Fawckner perceived near the market "Three fine horses grazing, and, it being rather an unusual sight, I enquired to whom they belonged; I was answered that they were the king's; but they had not been ridden for some time, and the natives were now afraid to mount them" (p. 86). Burton, however, did not see a single horse; all were absent at the wars. They are described as a good but

<sup>1</sup> "At Warri the land is very barren and devoid of grass, but affords much fruit, cocoanuts, bitter and sweet oranges, year after year, besides other trees and vegetables. There is also pepper as in Benin, but in small quantities because it is not much cultivated. Bananas are largely grown, and the natives also plant *mandihoka* (manioc) of which they make *Farinha* (meal) to make their bread with. On account of the poor pasture lands there are no beasts of burden such as horses or cows; but on the other hand much poultry of a big sort, which the natives roast very well, basting it with its own fat mixed with the yolk of an egg. Fish can be got in relative abundance, sometimes also sea-cows, which have a good flavour" (Dapper).

small breed, about fourteen hands high, something between the pony of Lagos and the large war charger of Yoruba (p. 411). "As a matter of fact natives would not keep horses in Benin, as it is in the forest belt where the poisonous *afon* tree (an *artocarp*) is plentiful. Only Europeans or natives under European influence would try to keep horses in such a district. Perhaps long ago Benin was not in the forest" (C. Punch).

#### FERMENTED DRINKS.

"The palm wine is indeed very delicious and good to drink. There are two sorts of sour palm wine, namely, *Vino de Palm* and *Vino de Bordon*. The former they drink in the morning and say it is then good for one's health, the latter, however, they drink in the evening, as they consider it better for health to drink it at night than in the morning" (D.R.) According to Nyendael the people "drink water, and pardon-wine, which is none of the best. The richer sort drink water, and brandy when they can get it." He also says "They sometimes employ the Ardra women to brew beer with the milbio; but it proves disagreeable and hot." Fawckner on his way to Benin, speaking of a palm says, "If this tree be tapped at the head, and a jar applied, it yields the bamboo wine; a very pleasing drink similar to our English ginger beer (p. 24), and later, "bamboo wine was brought to refresh and cheer us. It is by no means an unpleasant beverage, and produces intoxication like other wines if taken to excess. It ferments quickly but will not keep longer than twelve hours, the Portuguese often employ it as a yeast in making their bread" (p. 29). The bambu wine is obtained from the *Raphia vinifera*, about which Beauvais tells us "a gridelin coloured liquid is extracted called Bourdon wine, not so soft as that from ordinary palm wine but more vinous and containing more spirit; easier to get, as accidents occur from breaking the girdle ropes used in climbing the wine palm. A strong spirit is made from the fruit, gathered every month of the year, by fermenting the kernels; this spirit is more coloured, more tasty, and keeps longer" (*Flore d'O. et de B.*). Burton considered the Benin palm wine too tart, and not equal to that of Gwato.

#### WATER.

Landolphe found that "to get good clear water one must fetch it from a little river, a quarter of a league distant from the city; the negroes only drink bad water, which they scoop out of pits" (I., p. 333). The Punitive Expedition found the same difficulty in having to fetch water from this creek.



FIG. 150 —Group of natives on road to Benin. From a photograph taken by Mr. C. Punch, Feb. 1891.

## CHAPTER XV

### MEDICINE

Native remedies—Want of respect for native doctors—*Palma christi*—Priest *versus* native doctor  
—A noted doctor—Salve for wounds—Varied but unknown pharmacopia.

“THE negroes of this country,” says Nyendael, “do not seem so much afraid of death as in other countries ; they are not uneasy at the naming of it, and ascribe the length or brevity of life to their gods. Notwithstanding which, they are very zealous in the use of those means which are thought proper for the prolongation of life ; for if they fall sick, the first refuge is the priest, who here, as well as on the Gold Coast, acts the doctor. He first administers green herbs, which proving ineffective, he has recourse to sacrifices. If the patient recover, the priest is held in high esteem, but if not, he is dismissed, and another, from whom better success is expected, is called in. If these sacerdotal doctors happen to cure the patient, they are very much revered ; but the sick person is no sooner perfectly recovered, than they are discharged without any respect. So that if the priests here have no other means of subsistence, they are generally poor, because each particular person offers his own sacrifices, and performs the service of his idols, without giving them any manner of trouble.”

Landolphe tells us that on one occasion one of the blacks cured some others of dropsy by giving them to drink three seeds of *Palma christi* reduced to powder and infused in a glass of cold water for twenty-four hours and strained. The swelling subsided at the end of the sixth or seventh day by a violent purging. (II., p. 66).

Roupell's officials distinguish between priest and medical man thus : “Jujuman and doctor are different ; for instance, if a man is sick from juju, *i.e.* bewitched, and he consults a jujuman, if he is indeed sick of a juju, the jujuman can know and can cure him, but if not he recommends him to consult the doctor. But a doctor is higher in the social scale than a jujuman. There is no head man of doctors ; each practices independently, but there is a noted man in the village of Bohimi, near Ora, in Itchan part—he was frequently consulted by Overami as to what should be done to avert sickness.”

Beauvais mentions (*Flore d'O. et de B.*) that the braised leaves of the *Struchium africanum* is put on to wounds, but is not very efficacious.

Mr. Punch is of opinion that the Bini possess a varied pharmacopia both for poisons and remedies, but unfortunately we know nothing about them.



FIG. 151.—Carved wood drum, from the north-west corner of Benin territory. The goat skin cover is ingeniously fixed on by means of tag-ends, greenhide thongs, and pegs. The figure possesses head, upper part of chest, and arms only; there is no body nor are there any legs. Instead of the snake emerging from the body as legs, the snake is here quite independent of the figure and headless. Height  $34\frac{1}{2}$  in. (87.7 cm.) In the possession of Mr. Graham Nicholas, The Bowers, Barkisland, Halifax.



## CHAPTER XVI

### MUSIC AND GAMES

MUSIC—Drums—Tusk horns—Awful discords—Music of Noblemen's retinues—Game bag music—Calabash noises—Harp—Dancing—Monotonous chants. GAMES—Warri or Mancala—Children's games.

"THEIR musical instruments chiefly consist in large and small drums, not very different from those of the Gold Coast. They are shaped like them, covered with leather or skins, and beaten in the same manner as they are." D.R. speaks of drums on several occasions. Beauvais at a feast mentions some musicians who "drummed on copper cauldrons"; while Landolphe at a Court function says there were "twelve enormous drums, seven feet long, made of hollow bambu covered with goat skin at one end, which gave forth a rumbling noise under the strokes of small drum sticks. These lugubrious sounds were joined to those of a dozen blacks, some of whom blew like madmen into elephant tusks, which were perforated at intervals like our church serpents, whilst others did not succeed much better with cowherd horns. The result was an awful discord which one must have heard to appreciate." (I., p. 114). Beauvais also speaks of a suite "of several musicians, some whistling in a sort of extended cornet, others in flutes faulty and discordant." According to D.R., in going to court, the noblemen's retinues were "blowing horns and whistles, some have a hollow iron whereon they strike," and again, "their men have special instruments like the game bags with which men in our country go to fish market; this net is filled with various things, and when they strike upon it with their hands, it rattles just as if a heap of walnuts were inside and were struck with the hands." (fig. 103). Nyendaël refers to a sort of "iron bells on which they play; also calabashes hung round with cowries, which serve them instead of castagnets; all which together afford a very disagreeable and jarring sound. Besides these, they have also an instrument, which must needs be called a harp; it is strung with six or seven extended reeds, upon which they play and sing so well, and dance to such good time, that it is very pleasant to see it. These are indeed the best dancers I ever saw amongst the negroes. The natives of Axim, in their annual feast, when they drive out the devil, have much the same sort of a dance, though neither so fine, nor nearly so diverting as this." (Nyendaël).

Adams seems to have been specially honoured. He says: "There are in Benin a number of itinerant dancing-women, who were sent to amuse me, and whose performance before the house constantly attracted a crowd of persons of both sexes, who conducted themselves with great decorum during the exhibition. The ladies danced in the fandango style, perhaps not quite so modestly as our fashionable belles, although more in character, by holding in their hands excellent substitutes for castagnets, with which they kept time admirably. These consisted of small hollow gourds, over which are spread nets, having small pease strung on the sides of the meshes. Holes at the top receive the fore-fingers of their right hands, with which

the gourds were shaken, and occasionally struck against the palms of their left hands, beating responses to the tunes sung by the dancers." (p. 115). At a human sacrifice Beauvais heard "a plaintive and monotonous chant by the people, who accompanied by rubbing their hands, or rather beating them together."

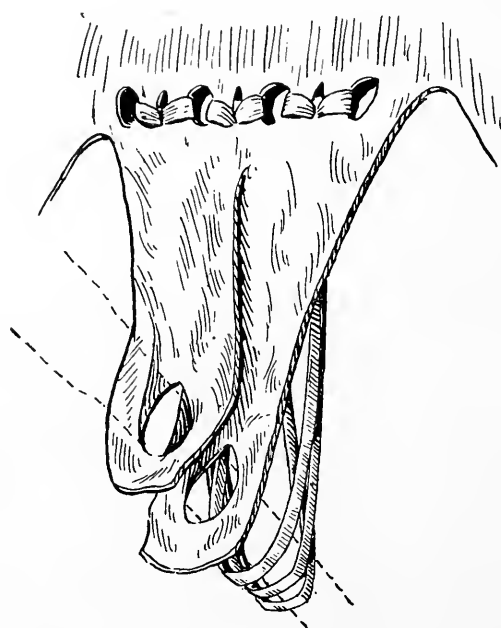


FIG. 152,—Lappets of the skin to show method of fixing.

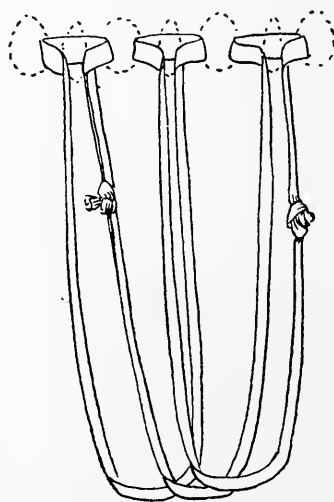


FIG. 153 —Greenhide thongs to assist in keeping the skins taut,

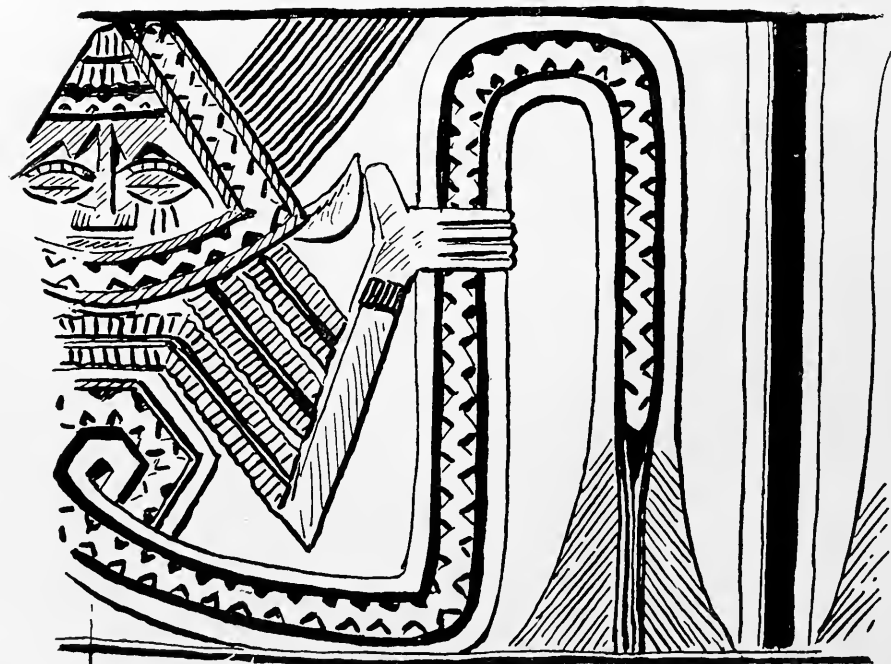


FIG. 154.—To show complete elaboration of the headless snake.

The natives "are not at all addicted to plays. There are no other games than those played with beans, and those only for diversion and pastime, but never for money." (Nyendaël). He evidently refers to the well-known game called Warri in Yoruba, which, as it has been well described, need not be further referred to here.

(See Stewart Culin, Mancala, the National Game of Africa, Rep. U. S. Nat. Mus. for 1894, pp. 595-607). "The children played a game with the flat seeds of a species of *phaseolus* not far related from *Physostyma venenosa*. The ground was marked out into compartments, and the beans, thrown with force in a certain way, lodged in the compartment driving out the opponent's beans" (C. Punch).



FIG. 155.—Bronze plaque representing a crocodile's head. Height  $18\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  in. (47 × 19 cm.) Bankfield Museum, Halifax.



FIG. 156.—Bronze plaque of a native adorned with armlets and curious method of hair-dressing. Height  $20 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  in. (50 × 19 cm.) Bankfield Museum, Halifax.



FIG. 157.—Abodoagmo and family, of Benin City. From a photograph taken by Mr. C. Punch, May 1891. Note the high door-step and the ribbed walls.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CITY AND ITS BUILDINGS

D.R.'s description—Long streets—Dismantled houses—The broad street identified (158)—High bulwarks—Ditch—Gates—Houses in good order—Arrangement of houses—Daylight comes in at roof—Walls—King's compound—Windam's description (160)—Roof of thin boards—Palm leaf roof—Dapper's description (160)—The town wall—The morass—City gates—King's compound—Magnificent buildings—Cast copper decorations—Roof of palm leaves—Straight and broad streets—Houses—Smooth walls—Comparison between D.R.'s and Dapper's descriptions—Nyendaël's account (162)—Half in ruins—No stone buildings—Description of the king's court—Gallery of wooden pillars—Gateway covered with a turret—Copper snake—Second gallery in ruins—Carved human figures—Tusks on human copper heads—Audience chamber—Tusks on ivory pedestals—Turrets—Barbot's account (163)—Legroing's account—Shingle roofs—Landolphe's account—The ditch—Thorny hedge—Sandy walk—Thatching—Ingenious roof work—Adams' account (164)—Irregularly built—Women's apartments—Lieut. King's account—Depopulation by civil war—Streets, houses, roofs—Divan round inner walls—Mats—King's palace—Tusks—Pyramid and copper serpent (165)—Designs on ceiling beams—Fawckner's account—Polished walls—Halls—Open roofs—Water drainage (166)—Beds—Fires in rainy season—Doors—King's palace of wood—Tower or steeple—Burton's account (167)—Gwato houses—Resembling brickwork—Roofing—Human skull—*Mezzo-relievo* figures—Roman architecture—Curious courts—Water drainage (168)—Chief's house—Bird images—King's court (169)—15,000 inhabitants—Gateway—Sacrificial tree and victims—Brass lamp—Carved ivories—Clean roads—Foul pits—Ruins—Fetish house—Victims' well—*Telamones*—Throne settle—Dr. Henry's account—Gallwey's visit (171)—Uncanny alcoves—Impression of a hand—Thatched roofs—Number of ruins—King's quarters—Carved tusks—Punitive Expedition report—The approach—King's and juju compounds—Altars—Bronze heads and tusks—Smell of human blood—Sacrifices—Fetish offerings—Palaver house (172)—Bronze snake—Carved beams—Embossed brass—King's house—Crucifixion trees—Water path—Decomposing bodies—Bacon's description (173)—Straggling town—Ochudi's compound—Sacrificial places—Altar—Tusks—Galvanised iron roof—Bronze serpent—Stamped brass (174)—King's house—Looking glass—Burial places of nobles—Watering place—Crucifixion tree (175)—Burial place of the people—City not without beauty—Blacksmiths' shops—Roth's description (175)—High wall—Brass sheeting—Pits—Brass heads and tusks—Altar objects—Blood and smell—Palaver house and snake—Muntz metal sheets (176)—Bronze pillars—King's chests (177)—The king's house—Doors and ivory catch—Roofing—Bench or bank along wall—Closets and kitchens—Framework of roof (178)—Various views (180)—Comparison with Ese Ado—How clay is worked (181)—Comparison with Old Calabar—Limits of Yoruba architecture (182)—No connection with western Sudan—Origin of the open courts—Gold Coast buildings (184)—Punch's detailed description of a house (187)—General arrangement—Drains, how made—Alcoves and store rooms—Locks (189)—Towers—Pyramids or turrets originally over door-ways. THE DITCH—Its excavation ascribed to Oguola—Other ditches.

For the earliest description of the buildings of the city we must go to D.R., who says: "At first the town seems very large; when one enters it one comes at once into a great broad street, which appears to be seven or eight times broader than the Warme Street in Amsterdam; this extends straight out, and when one has walked a quarter of an hour along it he still does not see the end of the street, but he sees a

big tall tree as far from him as the eyes can reach, and some Netherlanders say that the street stretches still so much further, that if one had been as far as that tree he would still see no end to the street; but he could perceive that the houses thereabouts are much smaller than those first seen, and that the further one goes one notices houses that were dismantled and falling down, so that it was thought the end of the street was thereabouts and did not stretch much further. That tree was not seen until one had walked about a quarter of a mile along the street, and from that point to the tree was a good half mile, so that it may be considered that that street is a mile<sup>1</sup> long, without counting what belonged to the suburbs. [Mr. C. Punch identifies the broad street of D.R. with the broad open space in front of the king's compounds; it seems to have divided the city into two parts].

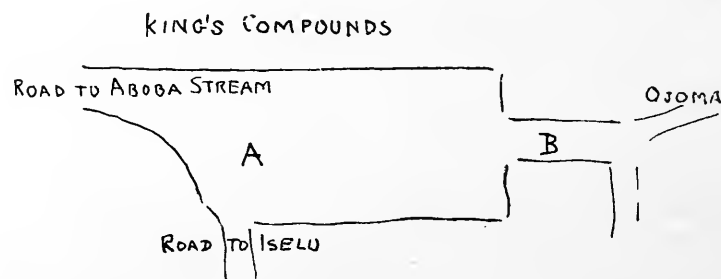


FIG. 158.—Sketch Plan of the broad street mentioned by D.R. as it appeared in Mr. Punch's time.

A Baobab tree with platform and human sacrifices.

B The broad avenue in which the corpses were lying exposed.

“At the gate at which one enters there is a very high bulwark, very thick and strongly made, with a very deep broad ditch, but it was dry and full of high trees. This ditch extends a good way, but we do not know whether it extended round the town or not. That gate is a well made gate, made of wood to be shut according to their methods, and watch is always kept there. Outside this gate there is a large suburb. When one is in the big street above mentioned, one sees a great many lanes and streets on both sides, which also extend far and straight, but one cannot see to the end of them on account of their great extent.

“The houses in this town stand in good order, one close to the other, like houses in Holland. Houses in which well-to-do people [*vornehme Leute*] such as gentlemen [*edel Leute*] dwell, have two or three steps to go up, and in front have an ante-court where one may sit dry, which court or gallery is cleaned every morning by their slaves, and straw mats spread for sitting on. Their rooms or apartments within [the court] are four square [*wie ein Mauer*], having a roof all round, which, however, does not join in the middle, but is left open so that the rain, wind and daylight can enter. In these houses they lie and eat, but they have special little houses for cooking, as well as other huts and rooms. The common houses are not built like this, for they have only one straight wall, in the middle of which there is a wooden door. They do not know how to make windows, but such air and daylight as they have comes in at the roof. The houses are, however, all alike red, and were surrounded [*? strack*] by walls, which they make of the earth they dig up, and which is greasy and sticky and mostly red; this earth they water and work it up much as we do mortar at home, dab it wet

<sup>1</sup> ? Dutch mile.



on top, one piece on another, and let it dry. They make the walls about two feet thick, so that these are not easily upset, for it sometimes happens that a heavy rain comes which washes down the walls and gives them much to do.

"The king's court<sup>1</sup> is very large, having many large square places within, surrounded by galleries and courts wherein watch is always kept. This court is so large

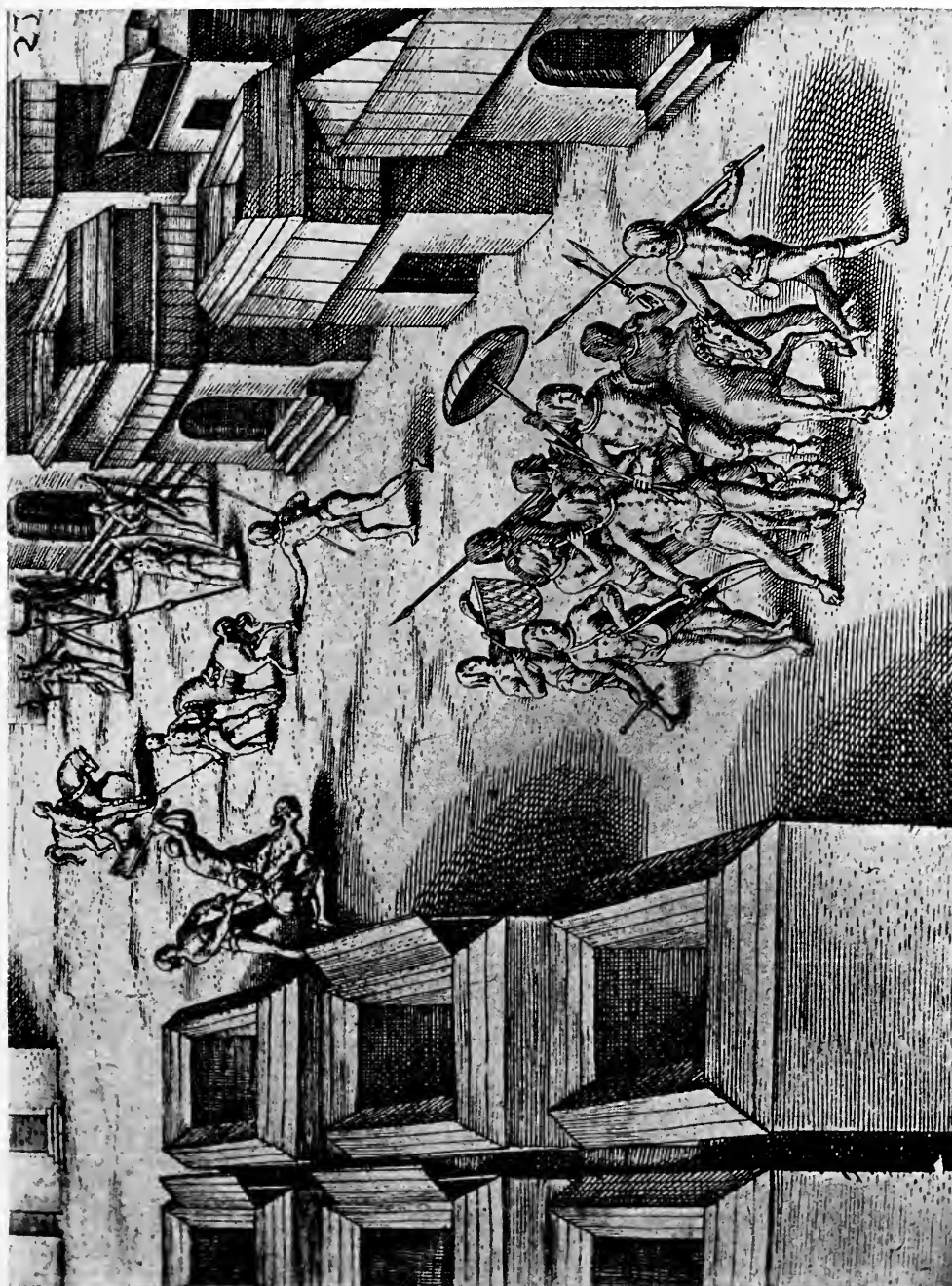


FIG. 159.—A scene in Benin City, being a copy of plate xxiii. in De Bry's *India Orientalis*, 6th part, Frankfurt, 1604, drawn from the description of D.R., with the assistance of a considerable amount of imagination. For instance, the axe used in the execution in the background is a European one, and quite different from the Bini execution knife. Neither do the Bini carry their drums [gourds] in the fashion depicted. Plank roofs are not Bini handiwork, and so on.

that the end is not to be seen, and when one thinks one has come to the end, one sees through a gateway other places or courts, and one sees many stables."

Accompanying this account is an illustration (fig. 159) of the city, about which the editor is very careful to say that it has been drawn, not from sight, but from a

<sup>1</sup> When he speaks of the king's court he means the whole quarter of compounds dedicated to the dead kings.

description,<sup>1</sup> yet while it is drawn according to the Dutch notions of the day, and is only from a description, it gives one a fair idea of the open courts of which the city consisted, and which were the city's architectural characteristics.

Windam simply tells us the King of Benin "sate in a great high hall long and wide, the wals made of earth without windows, the roof of thin boards, open in sundry places, like unto louers to let in the aire" (Hakluyt ii., 2nd pt., p. 12). This reference to 'thin boards' is not clear. Mr. C. Punch hazards the comparison with the methods of the Ijos "who have a way of pining out the leaflets of the palms quite flat, so that the whole frond seen from underneath and dimly, would look to be a plain rectangular surface like a board. The thatch used in Benin was always the pressed leaves of the *Raphia vinifera*. It does not grow quite near the city and was carried thither. The leaves of a scitamineous plant were also used, but I have not been able to identify it."

After Windam we have a fairly full account of the city by Dapper:—

"The town, comprising the queen's court, is about five or six miles in circumference, or leaving the court outside, three miles inside its gates. It is protected at one side by a wall ten feet high, made of double stockades of big trees, tied to each other by cross-beams fastened cross-wise, and stuffed up with red clay, solidly put together. This wall only surrounds the town on one side, there being on the other, where there is no wall, a morass and close underwood, which affords no little protection and strength to the town. The town possesses several gates, eight or nine feet in height and five in width, with doors made of a whole piece of wood, hanging or turning on a peg, like the peasant's fences here in this country [Holland]. The king's court is square, and stands at the right hand side when entering the town by the gate of Gotton [Gwato], and is certainly as large as the town of Harlem, and entirely surrounded by a special wall, like that which encircles the town. It is divided into many magnificent palaces, houses, and apartments of the courtiers, and comprises beautiful and long square galleries, about as large as the Exchange at Amsterdam, but one larger than another, resting on wooden pillars, from top to bottom covered with cast copper, on which are engraved the pictures of their war exploits and battles, and are kept very clean. Most palaces and the houses of the king are covered with palm leaves instead of square pieces of wood [? shingles], and every roof is decorated with a small turret ending in a point, on which birds are standing, birds cast in copper with outspread wings, cleverly made after living models.

"The town has thirty very straight and broad streets, every one of them about one hundred and twenty feet wide, or as wide as the Heeren or Keizersgracht [canals] at Amsterdam, from one row of the houses to the other, from which branch out many side streets, also broad, though less so than the main streets.

"The houses are built alongside the streets in good order, the one close to the other, as here in the country, adorned with gables and steps, and roofs made of palm or banana leaves, or leaves from other trees; they are not higher than a *stadie*, but usually broad with long galleries inside, especially so in the case of the houses of the nobility, and divided into many rooms which are separated by walls made of red clay, very well erected, and they can make and keep them as shiney and smooth by washing and rubbing as any wall in Holland can be made with chalk, and they

<sup>1</sup> After plate XX. and before plate XXI. there is an editorial note on top of the page, which runs: "Folgen noch etliche Figuren welche nicht in den Hollandischen gemacht, sondern aus der Beschreibung gezogen und hie zu Ende gesetzt sindt."

are like mirrors.<sup>1</sup> The upper storeys are made of the same sort of clay. Moreover, every house is provided with a well for the supply of fresh water: in short, the houses are built there more neatly than anywhere in that country."<sup>2</sup>

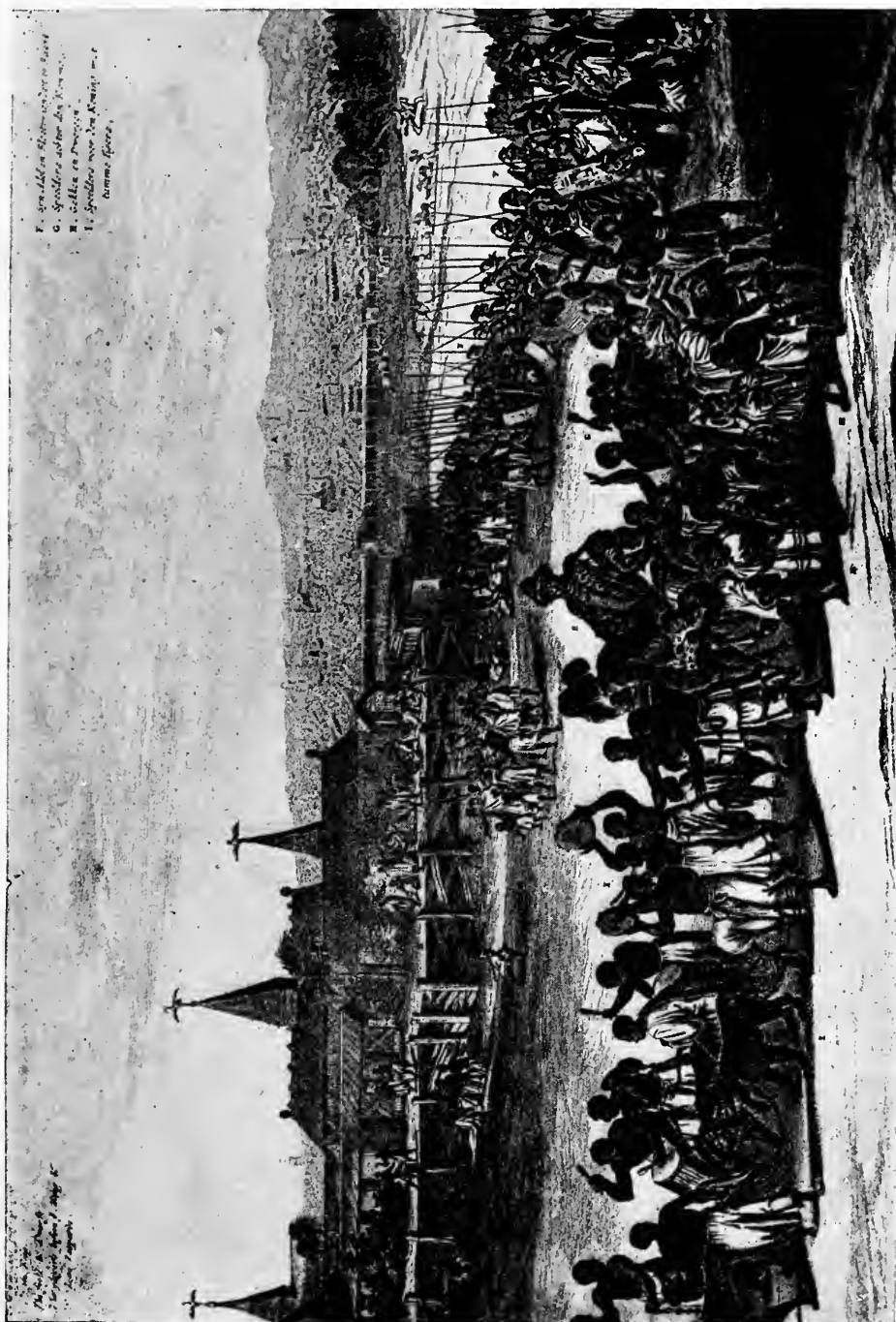


FIG. 160.—View of Benin City, after Dapper. This is another fancy picture. One may, however, note the spotted leopards and compare them with the carved ivory and bronze leopards found in the city. As regards the birds on the towers, many staves surmounted with birds with semi-outstretched wings were found in Benin when the city was taken. In Yoruba at the present day a bird appears to be the emblem of royalty, and as the relationship of the Yorubas and Bini is of the closest character, it may be possibly true that at one period the Bini placed the royal emblem on the roofs of the king's residence.

Like D.R., Dapper gives an illustration of the city (fig. 160), but from the outside, with a procession of the king, which might have been designed from the

<sup>1</sup> "The chief of Gwatto's house was very much superior, the walls, which were very thick, being polished till they were nearly as smooth and shiny as glass." (Boisragon, p. 81). "For giving a polish to the clay walls in Yorubaland, the leaves of the *Moringa pterygosperina* are mashed up and rubbed over the clay. Nana's father, Aluma, had a clay house in Brohemi, the walls of which were better polished than any in Benin. They were like marble." (Cyril Punch)

<sup>2</sup> Of Warri, Dapper writes: "About twenty-seven miles up the river there is a town or borough,

description of D.R. In his own description, however, he mentions the posts covered with carved copper, palm thatch, *not* shingles, shiney and smooth walls, particulars which do not appear in D.R., but which we now know to be correct. His description and drawing of the wall and the eagle-topped turrets, however, does not tally with other travellers, excepting Barbot, although he would be correct if the use of the word bulwark for the wall, as given by Purchase, is rightly translated. His wording about the houses reads very much like that of D.R.

The next description has been given us by Nyendaël: "The village of Benin, for it at present scarcely deserves the name of a city, is the residence of the great King of Benin, whence the whole land and river also borrows its name. It is situate about ten miles inland from the village of Agatton [Gwatto]. The neighbouring country is flat, as is the village itself, which is at least four miles long. The streets are very long and broad, and markets are continually kept in them. Formerly the buildings in this village were very thick and close together, and in a manner it was over-populated, which is yet visible from the ruins of half remaining houses; but at present the houses stand, like poor men's corn, widely apart from each other. The houses are large and handsome, with clay walls; for there is not a stone in the whole country as big as a man's fist; they are covered at the top with reed, straw or leaves. The architecture is passable, considered in comparison with negro buildings, and is very like the architecture of Axim. The long and wide streets, as I have mentioned above, are kept very neat by the women; for here, as well as in Holland, every woman cleans her own doorstep.

"The king's court, which forms a principal part of the city, must not be forgotten. It is on a very great plain, near which are no houses, but apart from its wide extent it is nothing out of the common. The first place we come into is a very long gallery, if it must have that name, which is sustained by fifty-eight strong planks about twelve foot high, instead of pillars; these are neither sawn nor planed, but only hacked out. As soon as we are past this gallery we come to the mud or earthen wall, which has three gates, at each corner one and another in the middle, the last of which is adorned at the top with a wooden turret like a chimney, about sixty or seventy feet high. At the top of all is fixed a large copper snake whose head hangs downwards. This serpent is very well cast or carved, and is the finest I have seen in Benin. Entering one of these gates, we come into a plain about a quarter of a mile, almost square, and enclosed by a low wall. Being come to the end of this plain, we meet with such another gallery as the first, except that it has neither wall nor turret. Some time since this gallery was half thrown down by a thunderstorm, since which it has not been rebuilt. This gallery has a gate at each end; and passing through one of them a third gallery offers itself to view, differing from the former only in that the planks upon which it rests are human figures; but so wretchedly carved that it is hardly possible to distinguish whether they are most like men or beasts: notwithstanding which my guides were able to distinguish them into merchants, soldiers, wild beast hunters, etc. Behind a white carpet we are also shewn eleven men's heads cast in copper, by much as good an artist as the former carver; and upon every one of these is an elephant's tooth, these being some of the king's gods.<sup>3</sup>

Ouwerre, where the king keeps his court. It is about half-a-mile in circumference, on the land side all surrounded by wood. There are beautiful buildings, especially the houses of the nobles, covered with palm leaves, like the Benin ones, and made of gray earth, which in Benin is red. The king's court or palace is built in the same manner as at Benin, but on a much smaller scale."

<sup>3</sup> Adams thus describes the audience chamber of Chief Cootry at Lagos, which town was



Going through a gate of this gallery, we enter another great plain, and a fourth gallery beyond, which is the king's dwelling-house. Here is another snake as upon the first wall. In the first apartment, at the entrance of this plain, is the king's audience chamber. . . . On the king's left hand, against a fine tapestry, I saw seven white scowered elephants' teeth on pedestals of ivory, which is the manner that almost all the king's gods are placed within his house." Nyandael mentions turrets in the same way as Dapper does, but in his case there is a large serpent on them, one of which has come down to our time, while on Dapper's turrets there were birds with outspread wings.

Barbot's accounts run thus: "The city is enclosed on one side by a double ridge of trunks of trees about ten foot high, set close together in the ground for a fence or palisade to it, the trunks fastened to one another by long pieces of timber athwart, and the interval between the two ridges or rows of trunks filled up with red clammy earth; which at a distance looks like a good thick wall very even and smooth. . . . The tops (of houses) are thatched with straw or palm tree leaves."

"Every building or house has also a small turret of a pyramidal form, on some of which is fixed a cast bird of copper with stretched out wings; which is also a pretty sort of work for blacks, and induces me to think they have tolerable good workmen, that are somewhat skilled in casting brass or copper." As regards the wall, the turrets and birds with stretched out wings, Barbot's wording reads as though he had Dapper's illustration before him.

Legroing tells us: "The city of Benin is situated in a plain surrounded by deep ditches. Vestiges of an old earthen wall are to be seen; the wall could hardly have been built of any other material as we did not see a single stone in the whole journey up. The houses for the most part are covered with *latanier* leaves, and those of the king with large shingles. In front of the king's houses there were two thick clumps of high trees, and these appeared to us to be the only trees planted by the hand of man (Labarthe, p. 175)." From Landolphe we learn that a "ditch more than 20 feet wide and as deep surrounds the town, and the soil taken out is made on the city side into a talus, on which a thorny hedge has been planted so thick, that not even an animal can get through. The height of this talus deprives one of a view of the houses at a distance, and one does not see them until entering the town, the gates of which are very far apart" (II., 48). "The streets are very broad; in the middle there is turf on which the kids and sheep feed; about thirty feet from the houses there is a level road, covered with sand for the inhabitants to walk on" (*ibid*, II., 50). He also mentions several spacious courts surrounded by earthen walls about sixteen feet high. Along the inside of the walls there ran a gallery fifteen feet wide, thatched with *natanier*. The thatching is done by overlapping the leaves which not being pulled apart, fall one on top of another to a thickness of eighteen inches. This roof is supported by large pieces of timber cut into the shape of pillars. They are set up about eighteen feet apart, and carry stout horizontal planks on which

formerly subject to Benin (pp. 102 and 103): "The entrance leading to the audience chamber presented a very curious spectacle. It was an oblong room of considerable length, having an opening along the centre of the roof to admit light and air. At one extremity there was arranged the king's fetiche, which consisted of three elephants' teeth placed in a reclining posture against the wall, with the convex part outwards, and sprinkled with blood. On interrogating Ocondo, the king's favourite and linguist, respecting the elephants' teeth and why they were Cootry's fetiche, his answer was that the elephant, being more sagacious and stronger than any other animal, he represented best (metaphorically, of course) Cootry's power over his subjects."

about the sloping joists which carry the roof, which was an ingenious piece of work”<sup>1</sup> (*ibid*, I., 111-112). Of the apartments of the king’s wives he says the walls are twenty feet high and five feet thick, solidly built of earth (*ibid*, I., 335).

Adams found the city “built very irregularly, the houses being placed without any regard to order, and detached; consequently occupying a large space of ground.” (p. 111). Of the king’s women’s habitation he says, “This building is some distance from the king’s residence, and has the form of a quadrangle with a large open area in

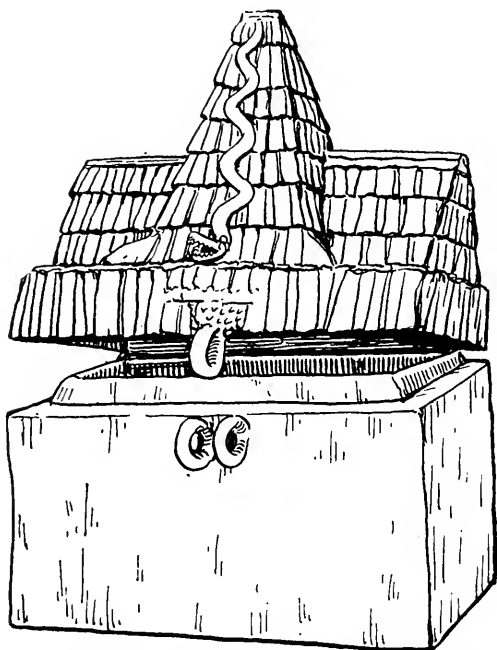


FIG. 161.—High-pitched roof on brass box from Benin. Liverpool Museum.

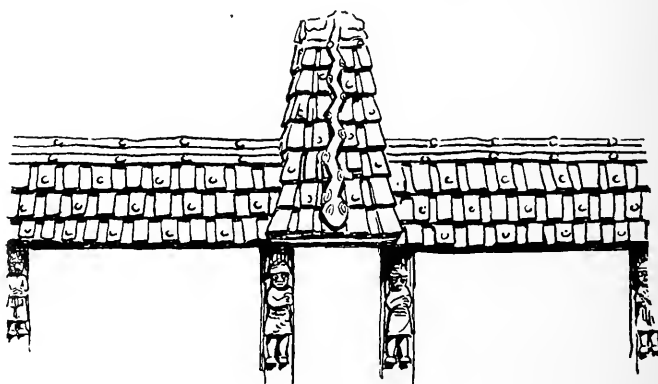


FIG. 162.—High-pitched king’s roof, from a plaque in the British Museum.

In both these illustrations the roofs are portrayed as though they were made of shingles. Legroing expressly states that the king’s house was roofed with large shingles. So as the copying of things European was a weakness of most of the kings it is not unlikely that the king in Legroing’s time had copied a European roof. Mr. Punch tells me he never saw a shingled roof in the City.

the centre; the doors and windows of the various apartments which compose the sides opening into it. The external walls are comparatively high, and have but one opening.” (p. 126).

According to Lieut. King, “Benin is situated in a plain at the foot of an amphitheatre formed by hills which extend to the east, west, and north. The walls having been to a large extent destroyed and the city having been formerly depopulated by a civil war, the circumference of the inhabited area does not now exceed two or three miles. The streets are broad and straight; the houses regularly built, but separated one from another by a narrow space, are constructed of mud and occupy the four sides of a square court; the roofs are covered with palm leaves. The houses of distinguished personages are very pretty and elegant; the inner walls are covered with mats, and round the court (*pourtour de la salle*) there is a divan raised about

<sup>1</sup> Landolphe speaks indifferently of *latanier* and *natanier*. I think he must mean *Latania Lodigesii* (Mart.), a palm, not a reed as he calls it. Beauvais in his *Flore* says the leaves of the *Raphia vinifera* are used for thatching.



eighteen inches above the level of the ground. Mats and woollen [*sic*] stuffs of home make are spread on the divan and ground.

"The walls of the palace are well preserved. In one of the facades at which Lieut. King entered there were three doors, of which the chief was in the middle; on each side were rows of eight or ten elephant tusks curiously carved, the points turned towards the wall. During the last insurrection the king was killed and a large portion of the palace was burnt down, but enough remains to bear witness to its former splendour. Down the centre of the facade rises a pyramid about thirty to forty feet high, on the top of which there was fixed a copper serpent whose head reached to the ground and whose body was as thick as that of a man. The inhabitants of Benin have no idea of the lapse of time, but say that this serpent has been there for several centuries. Two apartments which Lieut. King saw, and of which one was the audience chamber of the king, had been spared by the fire; the



FIG. 163.—Street in Benin City. The walls in the background are covered with palm leaf thatch; this shows more distinctly in the photograph than in the print. From a photograph taken by Dr. Allman, Feb., 1897.

ceilings were flat and the beams which crossed them were covered with various designs." It will be observed that King speaks of a pyramid, and in so far his description of these buildings agrees with that of Dapper, who, however, called them turrets.<sup>1</sup>

From Fawckner's description it is clear the characteristics of the city buildings were also those of the country in general. Of Yarcella, between Moongye, on the coast, and Gwato, he says: "Their houses are all built together forming an oblong square, at the head of which stands the fetish hut." At Gwato he finds "The walls of the buildings are of clay and are covered in with rafters, across which branches of bamboo<sup>2</sup> are laid and tied down. There are no windows, but an aperture in the

<sup>1</sup> He describes Warri as containing "about three thousand inhabitants, yet has no walls; the streets are wide and straight and the houses resemble those of Benin. The king's residence is more than half-a-mile in circumference and is surrounded by a wall on three sides, while the facade opens into a large square. At one corner of the building there is a pyramid about thirty feet high."

<sup>2</sup> The word bambu is commonly wrongly used when the midrib of the *Raphia vinifera* is meant. The bambu is common enough in Yoruba land, but does not appear to be indigenous in the Benin country.

middle of the roof serves to let in the light, under which stands a cistern or tank, which conveys the rain away through holes into the ground. Round it is a walk about three feet wide, where the people dance. . . . In the centre is a bench formed of brown clay which by frequent rubbing with a piece of coconut<sup>1</sup> shell and wet cloths has received a polish, and when dry looks like marble. Here is placed the fetish (pp. 32 and 33). The huts are rather larger than those we had previously seen, being about ten or twelve feet high on the inside, and some of the halls about forty feet long and twenty broad. They are for the most part built of clay and surrounded by walls of the same material. The roof is covered with branches of the bamboo tree; in the centre is a hole which serves the purposes of window and chimney. Through this hole the rain also falls and is received into a large square



FIG. 164.—The king's wall, Benin City, drawn by Mr. G. K. Jones, *Daily Graphic*, Jan. 15th, 1897.

tank immediately underneath, and conveyed away underground by channels from one room to another." (p. 71). And again, "Their beds, which consist of mats, with a covering of coarse cotton cloth, are placed on the ground in a recess in the wall, which often serves also as a depository for their fetish. During the rainy season they sit around a small fire kindled on the floor, without anything to enclose it, and the smoke escapes through the aperture in the roof, where generally may be seen suspended their war drum, together with earthen vessels and various articles of fetish. The doors are hung much in the same manner as a ship's rudder, the hinge being formed of wood resembling a spigot and fosset." (p. 72).

Of Benin he tells us the "houses are decidedly superior to those at Gatto, being larger, but for the most part built on the same principle. The palace of the

<sup>1</sup> "Fawckner is in error here; the empty shell of the large land snail (and not a coconut shell) is always used for polishing the clay walls." C.P.

king is a large building of wood, not unlike one of our British shot manufactories, having a tower or steeple at one end; the rest of the building consists only of one story; the whole is surrounded by mud walls, which extend some miles. Near it are several fetish places, the depository of the usual absurd objects of worship—skulls, skeletons, and large ivory teeth. Many unfortunate slaves are also sacrificed at different seasons in front of these temples.” (p. 83).

At the time of Fawckner’s visit there was thus one tower or steeple [turret, pyramid] left. He states it was built of wood, while his predecessors do not mention the material of its composition.

The Surgeons Moffatt and Smith do not appear to have published any description of the city when they visited it. The next traveller that came upon the scene was Captain Richard Burton. He firstly describes the houses of Gwato thus: “Once a place of considerable importance and studded with factories and business houses, Gwato now contains from twenty to thirty habitations, mostly ruinous, but sometimes showing traces of former splendour. Streets are, of course, unknown, the tenements are either built in clumps or separated by tracts of bush. The best buildings have walls of deep red clay ribbed horizontally so as to resemble brickwork, and a little smearing makes them look neat and new; the common sort are merely of courses successively dried, as universal in Yoruba. All are capped with tall pent-houses of matting with a steep slope to throw off the heavy rains, and, as tornados are violent, the timber-work of the interior is uncommonly strong and massive. The outside gate of the ‘parson’s’<sup>1</sup> house is decorated with a human skull, trans-fixed with an iron, and a monkey’s head side by side, on an earthen bench at the doorway. The walls are adorned with figures of clay in mezzo-relievo, daubed black, yellow, and red, and representing giant warriors, with uplifted battle-axes. There is a curious likeness between these efforts of infant art and the Nineveh bulls, which is probably a coincidence. But the following peculiarity can hardly be attributed to accident. It is impossible not to think that Yoruba in ancient times derived its architecture through the Romans, whose conquests in Northern Africa were as extensive as in the North of Europe. We find in every house a perfect Tuscan atrium, with the cavædium<sup>2</sup> or gangway running round the rectangular impluvium, the tank or piscina, which catches the rain and drippings falling through the compluvium or central opening in the roof. Sometimes the atrium is a tetrastyle in which pillars at the four corners of the impluvium support the girders or main beams of the roof. As at Abeokuta, the latter is thickly thatched and falls in at a steep angle.

“I can understand the use of the atrium in beautiful Italy, where it tempers the warm rays of the sun by cool shade and softens the summer glare into mellow light. But in these lands of violent rains, fierce tornados, harmattans and smoke, it is impossible to understand the feelings and motives of the builders, unless, indeed, they derived the idea of their hypæthral apartments from the ancient conquerors of Morocco and the Atlas.

“The larger houses have many of these curious courts, of which the third usually leads to that which serves as a reception room. On the outside there are raised earth benches for those who would enjoy the air. The rooms are dark and windowless, all of them have at least one alcove, and similar seats are disposed round

<sup>1</sup> The Ahuraku, *i.e.* the Malaku priest and chief of Gwato was known by this name.

<sup>2</sup> “I am not ignorant that the meaning of this word is still under dispute; it is used above to denote the area between the tank and the walls of the room.” R.B.

the impluvium. The latter has always a hole in one of the corners, through which the superabundant humidity passes off. In the centre is some fetish, either a cone of clay, one foot high, with a central aperture set with cowries, or a pot of water half buried in the ground" (p. 278). Then continuing, he describes a chief's house in Benin as follows: "The house, however, was by no means in first rate order. It was the usual Yoruba abode, a large walled compound, with a single great gate, and the interior was a labyrinth of alleys, passages, courts, apartments, hypaethral offices,

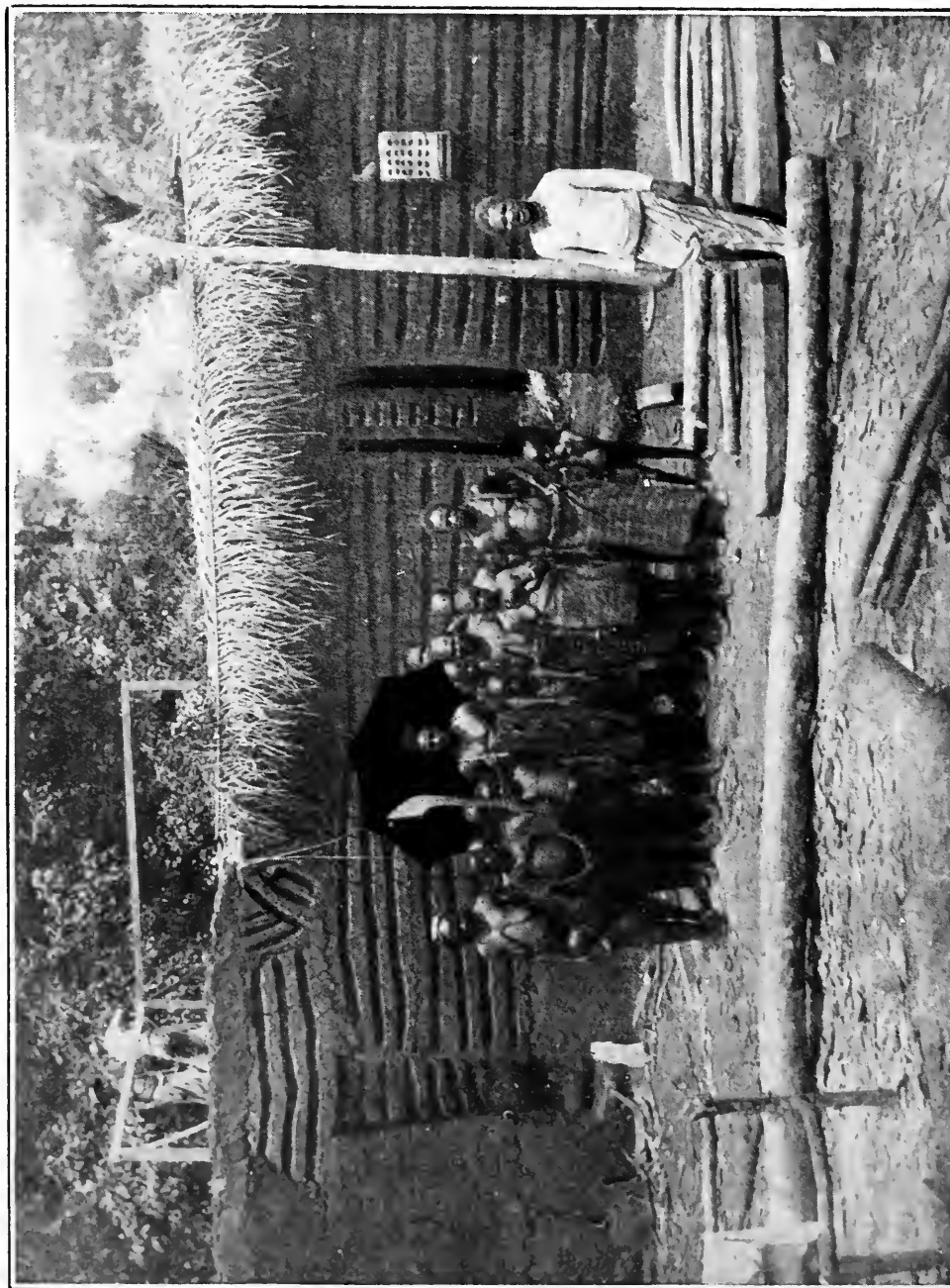


FIG. 165.—House in course of erection. From a photograph taken by Mr. C. PUNCH, March, 1892.

and windowless store-closets, the latter always leading out of the sitting-room. The atrium prepared for us had been freshly smeared. Like all others it had its household gods, three rude wooden images of turkeys<sup>1</sup> with drooping wings, disposed in

<sup>1</sup> Compare this description of the bird with Dapper's turret bird.

triangle, supported by two short truncheons, and placed in a black and white striped niche in the northern wall, with a raised step below it. I can say little in its favour as regards comfort. There were three doors, which rendered it a meeting-place of moving multitudes, till we barricaded two of them. There was no look-out except through those entrances, at brick walls two feet distant—uncommonly dull on a fine day! And when it rained, the cold torrents pouring through the compluvium made it feel damper and look drearier still (p. 288).

“The king’s court, or quarter, is called Obwe; it is a large village, or rather town, separated from the neighbouring settlements by streets broader than Parisian squares, and appropriated to the royal family, great men, courtiers, and slaves. This part of the city is supposed to contain not less than fifteen thousand souls. It is in a most ruinous condition. . . . The outermost gateway of the palace was guarded by a fetish altar on the left hand, and in front stood a suspicious clump of trees, which at once suggested to me an Oro grove.<sup>1</sup> Having passed through the tumble-down gateway, we saw before us a spacious square, surrounded by broken brick-work and adorned with noble trees. On one of these, which had apparently been lightning blasted, flights of turkey buzzards drew our attention to the form of a fine young woman, seated, and lashed hand and foot to a scaffolding of rough branches, which raised her ten or twelve yards from the ground. The birds had been busy with her eyes, part of the bosom had been eaten away, and the skin was beginning to whiten—a ghastly sight. In the centre of the precincts was a brass neptune, planted upon a tall pole; it was intended as the reflector of a palm oil lamp, a trick which the natives probably learned from the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> At the further end of the palace-yard was a large shed, containing the usual number of fine large carved ivories, planted leaning against the wall (p. 407). Resuming our walk, we passed through the town in a northern direction. Like Abeokuta, it is divided by tracts of bush and wide avenues into a number of distinct settlements, each bearing its own name. The quarters have regular streets and lanes, and in many places the ground before the walls was carefully swept and cleaned. When a road passed between two houses, both householders were bound to keep it in order. Unhappily, the king had not ordered his subjects to fill up the foul pits from which building clay is taken: these still remain the founts of fever and dysentery. The immense number of ruins were referred by our guides, George and Sáyáye, to the absence of 10,000 soldiers at a war which has lasted since 1854 (p. 410). We passed by sundry waterholes and yards with tumble-down walls and great gaps, that rendered gates unnecessary. One of the courts contained a grand fetish-house, with a number of ivories showing very curious and interesting work. At the bottom of the *enceinte* and facing the *sacellum* was a little grass-grown rise, the margin of a wide and deep well into which the custom’s victims are thrown. The people called this the old king’s fetish court, and it is kept in order by the piety of his son. The next square was subtended by a huge shed, open in front, and supported by eight *Telamones*—rude figures of war men, one of them falling from under its load. From the court of the *Telamones* a small wooden door opened upon a lane, and across this was an *atrium* of peculiarly ruinous appearance. Thence we entered an adjoining room. . . . At the lower atrium there was a rude earthen bench facing a similar one at the upper end, upon which was a

<sup>1</sup> “For Oro himself, the Oro grove and the horrid purposes to which it is put, I must refer the reader to any work on the mythology of Yoruba” R.B. See chapter on Fetish.

<sup>2</sup> This was probably a large standard lamp (see fig. 125).



small wooden settle serving for a throne. Dr. Henry set out at 7 a.m. to go the rounds of the homograns,<sup>1</sup> which took him three mortal hours, wandering through the great extent of the royal village.” He describes the houses of the chiefs as far

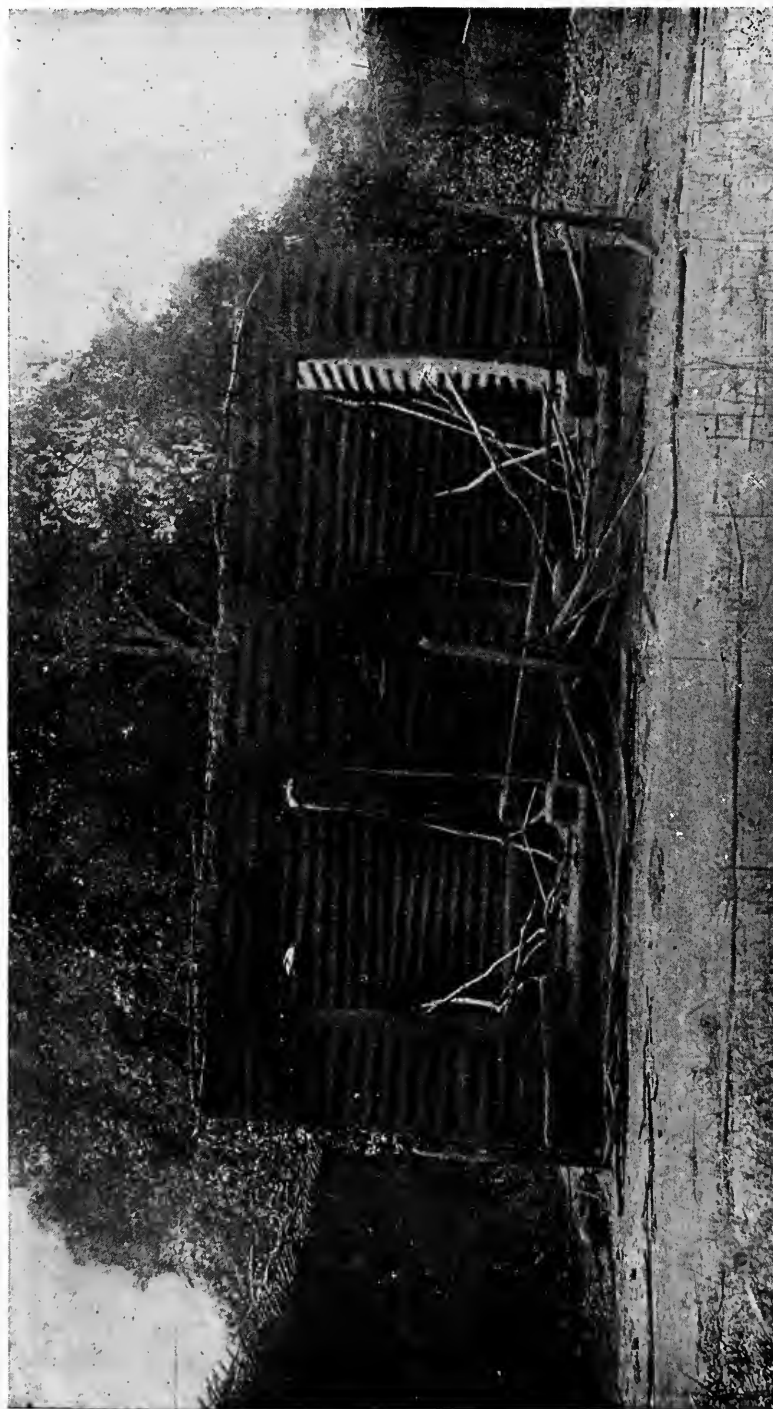


FIG. 166.—Ruined house, Benin City. From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville.

superior to the palace, “the *atrium* large, spacious, freshly glazed, and perfectly clean, the altars inlaid with cowries and porcelain platters, and filled with carved wood and ivories, and fine mats spread out in the alcoves” (p. 416).

<sup>1</sup> ‘Big men,’ *fiadors*, etc.



Captain Burton was the first to make the comparison between the style of building adopted in Benin, and that of the domestic architecture of the Romans. To this comparison I will return later. He notices no turrets nor large snakes.

Captain Gallwey visited the city in 1892. He was lodged in two houses which "were built of red clay, having a high wall all round forming a sort of court-yard. There were two fair rooms, and many uncanny alcoves; skulls, human and otherwise, hung around promiscuously. The walls were adorned with the impressions of a very large hand in lime and blood. The roof was a thatched one, full of creeping things." Of the city he writes that it is "a straggling collection of houses, built in clusters here and there, in little or no order. The number of ruins testify to the fact that it was once very much larger; but in our wanderings through the place we saw nothing that suggested 'prodigious long and broad streets.' The only market-place we saw was on the plain outside the king's residence. . . . The principal part of the city is the king's residence. This consists of a number of compounds, each surrounded by a high mud wall. In each compound is a fetish shrine composed of numbers of elephants' tusks, some very beautifully carved, together with a collection of native brass work, the whole freely besprinkled with blood. After passing through several of these compounds you come to the king's houses, built of red clay, and with nothing particular to recommend them" (p. 130).

Five years after his visit occurred, in January, 1897, the terrible massacre of Phillips' party, which was quickly followed by the Punitive Expedition. The official account of the city (Foreign Office Report) is as follows: "Approaching from Ologbo the bush party suddenly debouches into a broad avenue running at right angles to it. This avenue runs through the centre of the town and ends on the west side in the Gwato road. It forms a main division of the town, on the southern side the king's and chiefs' compounds, and to the northward those of the lesser chiefs and people.

"The houses are built of red mud and thatched with palm leaves, the only iron roofs being those of the palaver house and a portion of the king's house.

"The king's compound consists of the king's house, palaver house, ju-ju houses and compounds, and living houses for the king's people, also old ruined houses, probably the burial places of former notable people. The front of the compound was protected by a mud wall about twenty feet high, with a sloping roof to the front. On entering the compound the first places met are two large ju-ju compounds. These are level-clearings covered with grass, capable of holding several thousand people, and at the south ends, under pent-house coverings, are the altars. The altars are raised mud platforms about three feet high, running more or less the whole breadth of the compound, and in the centre are unique bronze heads, each head supporting a carved ivory tusk. On the altars also were rudely-carved maces for killing the victims—whose blood was subsequently smeared over the altar and allowed to run down the steps in front. In the main ju-ju compound the smell of human blood was indescribably sickening, the whole grass portion of the compound reeking with it. In the corners of some of these compounds were pits for the reception of the bodies of the victims. Five large ju-ju compounds were close together in the king's compound. The immense number of lives sacrificed in them is appalling to think of.

"In addition to these large public ju-ju places, every house appeared to have its ju-ju room, and many a sacrificial altar on which annual sacrifices were found. In these ju-ju rooms rubbish of all sorts was collected as offerings; carved sticks, rough plaster figures, and cowries being the most frequent.

"Behind the ju-ju places was the palaver house, and side by side with it the king's house. The palaver house was a large building, about 100 feet long and 50 or 60 broad, with a raised polished wood seat running round the four walls under a pent-house galvanized iron roof, the centre of the yard being open to the air. Run-



FIG. 167.—Outside corner of the king's compound. Plain walls. From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville. Note the four courses of which the wall is made. Mr. Cyril Punch writes me that ordinary people were only allowed to put up three courses in their house walls, nobles five, and the king up to seven courses.

ning down the roof on the south side was a huge bronze snake with a large head, and in the centre of the court a bronze crocodile's head. The supporting beams for the roof were carved with a sennit pattern and covered with thin brass. The doors also were covered with embossed brass. The colour of the brass and its bright surface indicated that it had undergone some form of ormolu preparation.

"The king's house was similar to the palaver house, but with rooms leading off it, and the beams over the king's seat or bed place had square patches of looking-glass let into them for decoration.

"The avenue in front of the king's compound opened out into a large cleared open space, and at the edges of this were the two crucifixion trees. The one to the westward was a fair-sized cotton tree, with its top and branches lopped off, and a sloping stage built about half-way up, for the victims to rest on.

"The second crucifixion tree was more to the westward, and was arranged for single crucifixions only. Opposite the king's compound a broad avenue ran, flanked with bush and occasional houses, for about three-quarters of a mile, when it suddenly contracted to a narrow gully, the bottom of which was barely broad enough to take the sole of a boot. This was the water path. This gully continued for about three-quarters of a mile, the sides being nearly perpendicular, and between 15 and 30 feet high. After that it broadened out, and the last quarter of a mile or so was a good road through the bush. The Ikpoba creek, which supplies the town with water, is only two or three yards wide, with a strong stream and full of snags, but just at the watering place it spreads out into a broad shallow pool, some 20 yards broad.

"Passing the king's compound, and going to the westward, a large tract of common land is met. This was simply strewn with bodies in every stage of decomposition, skulls, and bones. Where the Gwato road starts was a large compound belonging to Ojumo, a big chief. At the opposite end of the town was Ochudi's compound. Several old cannon were found and destroyed, the most modern dating from the early part of the century."

Commander Bacon tells us: "Benin is an irregular straggling town, formed by groups of houses separated from each other by patches of bush. It is, perhaps, a mile-and-a-half long from east to west, and a mile from north to south. Entering from the direction of Ologbo through a grass avenue flanked with bush, a few houses are seen on the left; these run well back into the bush, and form quite a large village of themselves; they belonged to a general called Ochudi, and the village was known as Ochudi's compound. Houses then struggled on, on the left side, till high red-clay walls are encountered, with a galvanized iron roof sloping outwards from the northern wall. This is the main entrance to the king's compound. In this compound or village are the ju-ju compounds, palava house, king's house, and many houses for the king's immediate followers and the ju-ju priests. It was in these ju-ju compounds that the main sacrifices were carried out. To describe one of these ju-ju places will be to describe all of them, as they only differed in position and size. These spaces were about a hundred and fifty yards long, and about sixty broad, surrounded by a high wall, and covered with a short brown grass. At one end was a long shed running the whole breadth of the enclosure and under this was the altar. The altar was made by three steps running the whole length under the shelter of the shed; slightly raised for some distance in the centre, on which raised portion were handsomely-carved ivory tusks placed on the top of very antique bronze heads. . . . In the centre of several of these ju-ju places was an iron erection like a huge candelabra with sharp hooks. . . . In most of the ju-ju compounds was a well for the reception of the bodies. . . . Behind these three main ju-ju compounds, lay the palava house and the king's house, side by side. The former a large oblong building, with a roof running over the side and end walls, leaving the centre open. The roof was of galvanised iron, and down the south portion of it ran a huge bronze serpent with a most forbidding looking head. Red mud seats ran round the walls, for the use of

the chiefs taking part in the palava. The doors were covered with stamped brass, as were also portions of the woodwork of the roof.

"The king's house was almost identical, but smaller, and had rooms leading off it. The arch-way over the king's sleeping-place was decorated roughly with stamped



FIG. 168.—View of a building said to have been the house of the chief Juju priest, ornamented with clay figures in relief. From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville. This form of decoration of clay figures in relief is fairly wide spread; Burton mentions it at Gwato (p. 277) and Lander speaks of seeing at Patashie (below Bousa and not far from Wowow on the Niger), on each side of a doorway of a house "two clay figures, nearly as large as life, which are affixed to the wall. One of them is intended to represent a woman in an upright position and without any clothing; the execution, as might be supposed, is rude and contemptible. The figure opposite to it is a pretty good representation of a crocodile." (II., p. 237).

brass and squares of looking-glass. The remainder of the compound consisted of store room, medicine house, and houses for the king's followers, as well as some other ju-ju compounds. After which it straggled away into ruined and uninhabited houses, used probably as burial-places for the men of note. Leaving the compound and facing north there was immediately in front a clear space, forming so to speak, the

delta of the road leading to the water at Ikpoba. On the right was a crucifixion tree. A huge piece of land ran away to the left, which seems to have been the common burial-place of the town, that is, if merely laying down a dead body, or at the most wrapping it in a piece of matting, can be called burial. . . . And yet the town was not without its beauty of a sort. Plenty of trees and green all round, the houses built in no set fashion, but each compound surrounded by its own bushes and shady avenues. It seemed a place suggestive of peace and plenty; let us now hope it may one day become so. There is not much more in Benin to describe, Ojumo's compound at the extreme west end was merely a small village, placed just where the Gwato road led into the main avenue. It was a queer remnant of the old military days of Benin, having the two great generals Ojumo and Ochudi, each guarding one end of the town where the main roads from Gwato, Ologbo, and Sapoba led in; and grazing all about the place were bullocks and goats.

"Beyond one blacksmith's shop<sup>1</sup> there was little sign of any native industry or evidence of much trade with the interior, in fact, it is known that the king was ruining the country by placing a juju on nearly every article of merchandise" (pp. 86, 88, 90, 94, 96, 97).

The last description that has come into my hands is that of my brother, Dr. F. N. Roth, late Medical Officer at Warri, and advance Surgeon to the main column of the Punitive Expedition. He says:—

"Starting with the king's compound and houses and going up the main road on the right, there is an immense wall 20 feet high and 3 or 4 feet at the base, and perhaps 2 feet wide at the top. At the back of this there is a big compound or open space, and it is entered through a doorway, the big door of which is lined with sheets of brass with stamped figures of men and leopards' heads. The big wall must be about 100 yards long, perhaps more.

"Passing through the central door we come to the compound; in it there is a big tree and at its foot there is a deep pit. These pits are found in all the compounds and some of them are more than forty feet deep. The original object of digging the pits is said to be the obtaining of the clay of which the walls are built. On the other side of the compound facing the big wall is another wall partly roofed in, and along this is a row of brass heads, and on the top of every head is a long, heavy, weather-worn finely carved ivory tusk; near them and against the wall were the wooden rattles with which, as we were told, captives were killed by being struck on the neck; between the brass heads were brass castings of men on horseback, in armour, in chain mail, etc., and many other articles which have since become familiar to us. All the articles were thickly encrusted with blood, and a fearful smell pervaded the place. These compounds repeat themselves *ad lib.* and so do the pits, ju-ju figures, blood, and stench.

"Through this compound to the right is the king's palaver or meeting house, where the king used to sit to meet strangers, etc. The first thing which strikes one here is the metal roof on which, just facing you, is an immense brass snake crawling down with its big head close to the gutter of the roof. There is a sloping roof of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. F. N. Roth tells me Commander Bacon is in error here, and that instead of the one blacksmith's shop, there was in the city a whole street of blacksmiths' shops. These shops had the appearance of cattle pens, and unless anyone looked closely into them and saw the remains of the work and the tools, he would think they were intended for mistals.



Muntz metal<sup>1</sup> all round this compound, leaving the centre of the compound open to the air and skies. This place is fairly lofty, and all the rafters are of wood carved with rough figures; some of the rafters have been covered with brass sheeting on

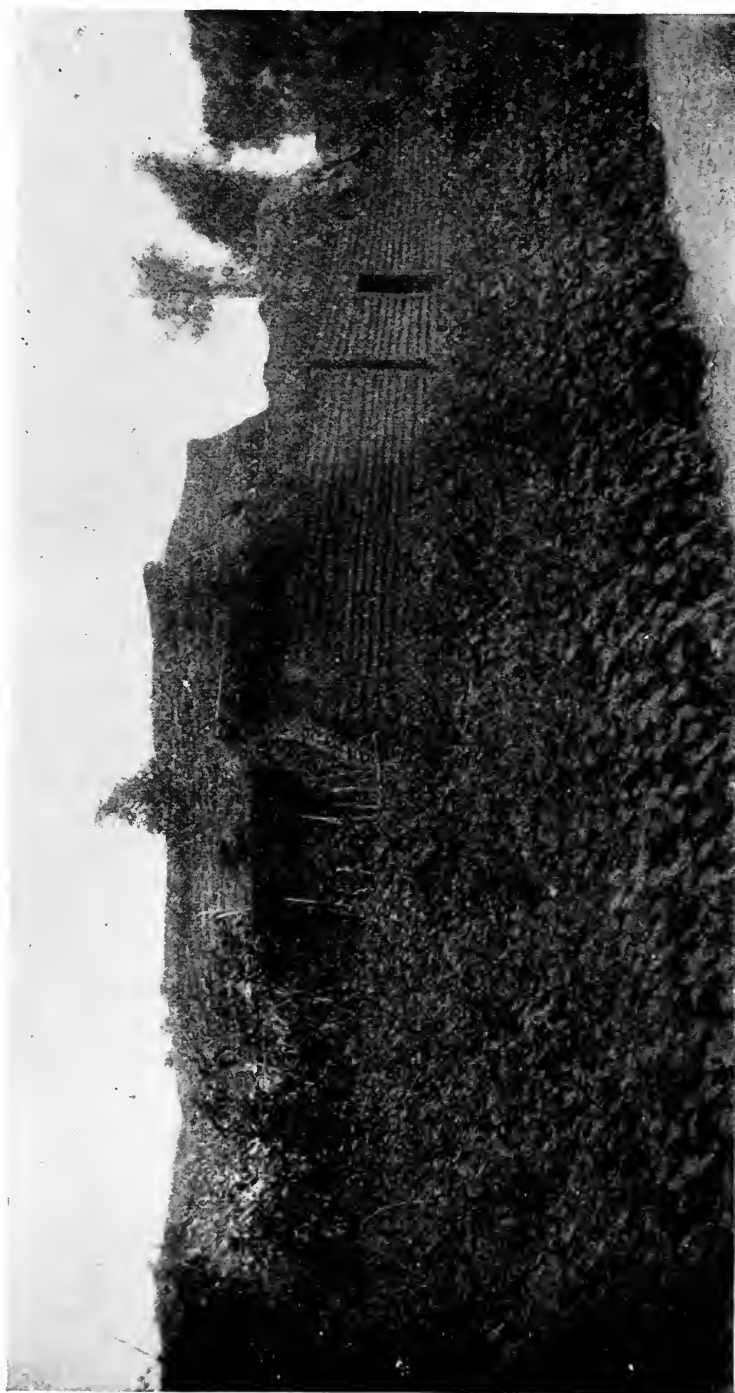


FIG. 169.—Wall round a house in Benin City, from a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville.

which figures have been punched. The roof is supported by over a hundred pillars made of bronze sheets rivetted together, giving a very good effect. Round the sides,

This palaver house was being finished during Mr. Cyril Punch's last visit in 1901, when the king informed him that he had obtained rough carpenters from the Jekri chiefs for making a big house; he said he was using a lot of iron sheets and Muntz metal, which Mr. Punch had previously obtained for him.



hundreds of people can find accommodation. It is entered through a big doorway, the door of which is covered with brass-work, fitted with an ivory catch attached to an ordinary native chain. Here were found the king's boxes, huge chests, practically dug-outs, with compartments made by leaving partitions as the hollowing process proceeded.

"Close to the palaver house on the right is the king's house. At the entry there is a huge wooden door made of horizontal slabs with two pieces of wood diagonally fixed on one side to hold them together; on the flat side it is covered with sheets of thin brass ornamented by means of a punch or blunt chisel, with a sort of guilloche pattern; it has the usual ivory catch. The house (or compound) is about sixty by twenty-five feet, and like the palaver house, it is furnished with a pent-roof all round. The roof is of galvanised iron and is supported by heavy rafters, etc., much resembling the oak roofings of old houses in England. The rafters are carved, but most

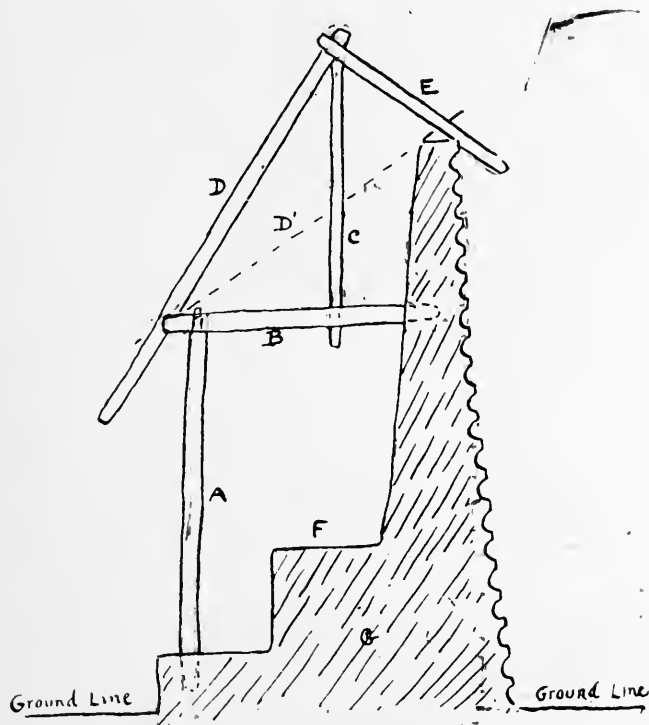


FIG. 170.

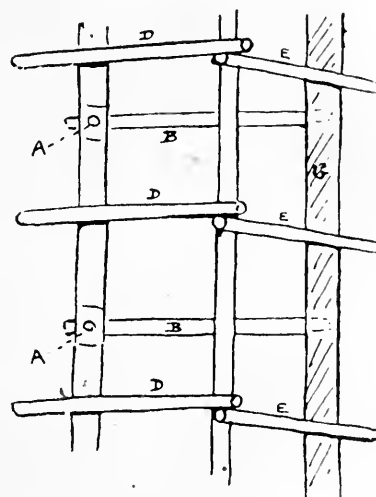


FIG. 171.

FIGS. 170 and 171.—Sketch of section of wall and of the roof timbering in a compound of the king's house, Benin, by Dr. F. N. Roth.

of them are covered with the figured brass sheetings which are so characteristic of the king's buildings, and are kept polished. The soil is banked up all round the walls to the height of about eighteen inches, and wide enough for people to lie down on all along. This embankment gives the centre of the house the look of a hollow, after the manner of the old Roman villas, and, of course, open to the skies. Round the walls are doorways leading to dark cupboards, or to queer dark passages which lead to kitchens, at least I judge so, because we saw little fires had been built in recesses in the walls. Such houses are very cool during the day but rather warm at night. The walls appear to be of sun-dried clay mixed with sand; they are generally fluted horizontally on both sides, but on the inner side the surface is very much smoothed and occasionally polished."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Landolphe, at Gwato, says the houses built of clay were polished inside with much art (I., 330)

Dr. Felix N. Roth has also given me sketches (figs. 170 and 171) of the method of building the walls and roof as they appeared to him when he slept in the king's compound on the first night of the arrival of the Punitive Expeditions. A represents the upright post or style; B the tie or binding beam; C the king post; D and E rafters (in some parts D had the position of D<sup>1</sup> when there would be no king post nor ridge). The style post A was about 8 feet high, the divan F running round the inside of the wall was about 3 feet wide and perhaps as high. He adds that while the Expedition was engaged in pulling down many of the walls for purposes of defence, he did not notice that any sticks or timber had been used to strengthen the walls, the only timber in the construction being that required for door-ways, windows and roofs. In some cases the clay appeared to have been simply lumped together to make the

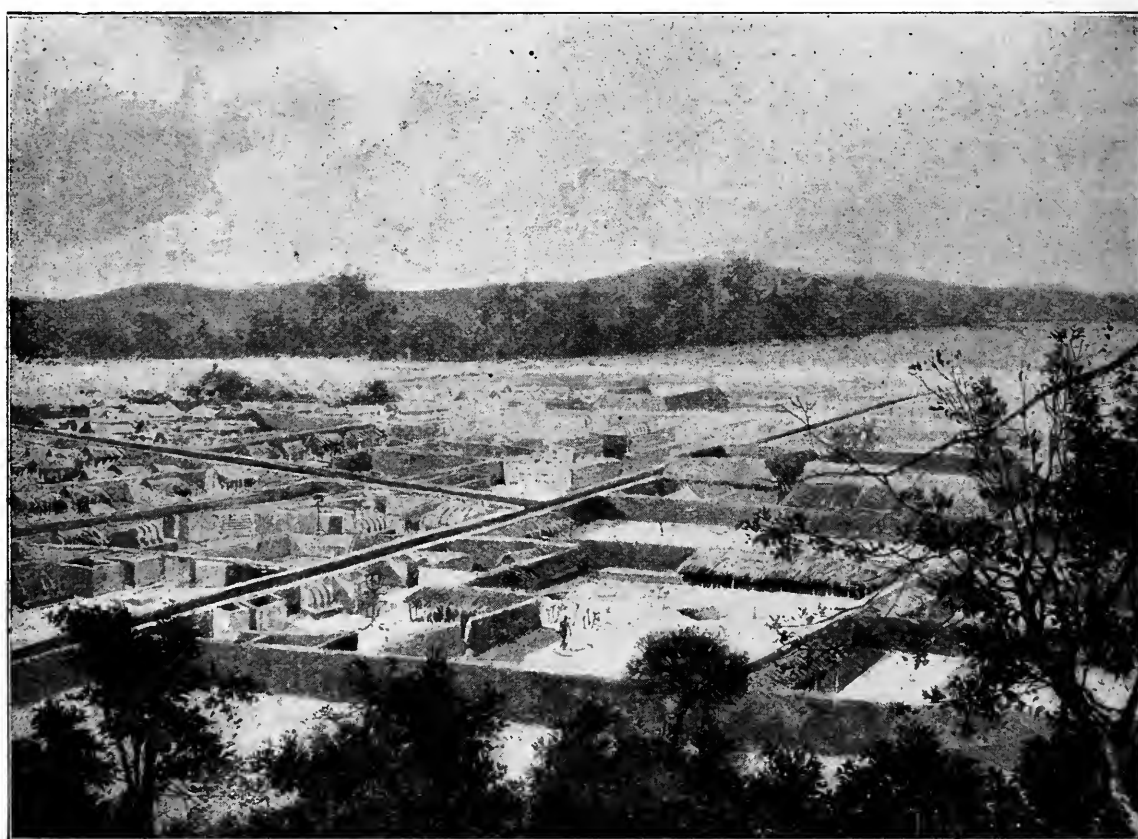


FIG. 172.—View of Benin City from one of the sacrifice trees, by Mr. H. C. Seppings Wright. Suppl. to *Illustrated London News*, March 27th, 1897. In reality the lines were not so straight as here depicted.

walls, but in others "I noticed that when the natives built the walls they made them in layers about two feet high, as shown in sketch. Each layer seemed to have been dried first before the next was built on to it. The big compound walls were all thicker at the base than at the top, but I did not notice this to be the case with regard to the ordinary walls of the huts, although the walls of the king's compound being very high were likewise thicker at the base. All the walls were thatched to withstand washing away by the rains."

In the Supplement to the *Illustrated London News* for March 27th, 1897, there is a "View of Benin" [City] (fig. 172) from one of the sacrificial trees, by Mr. Seppings

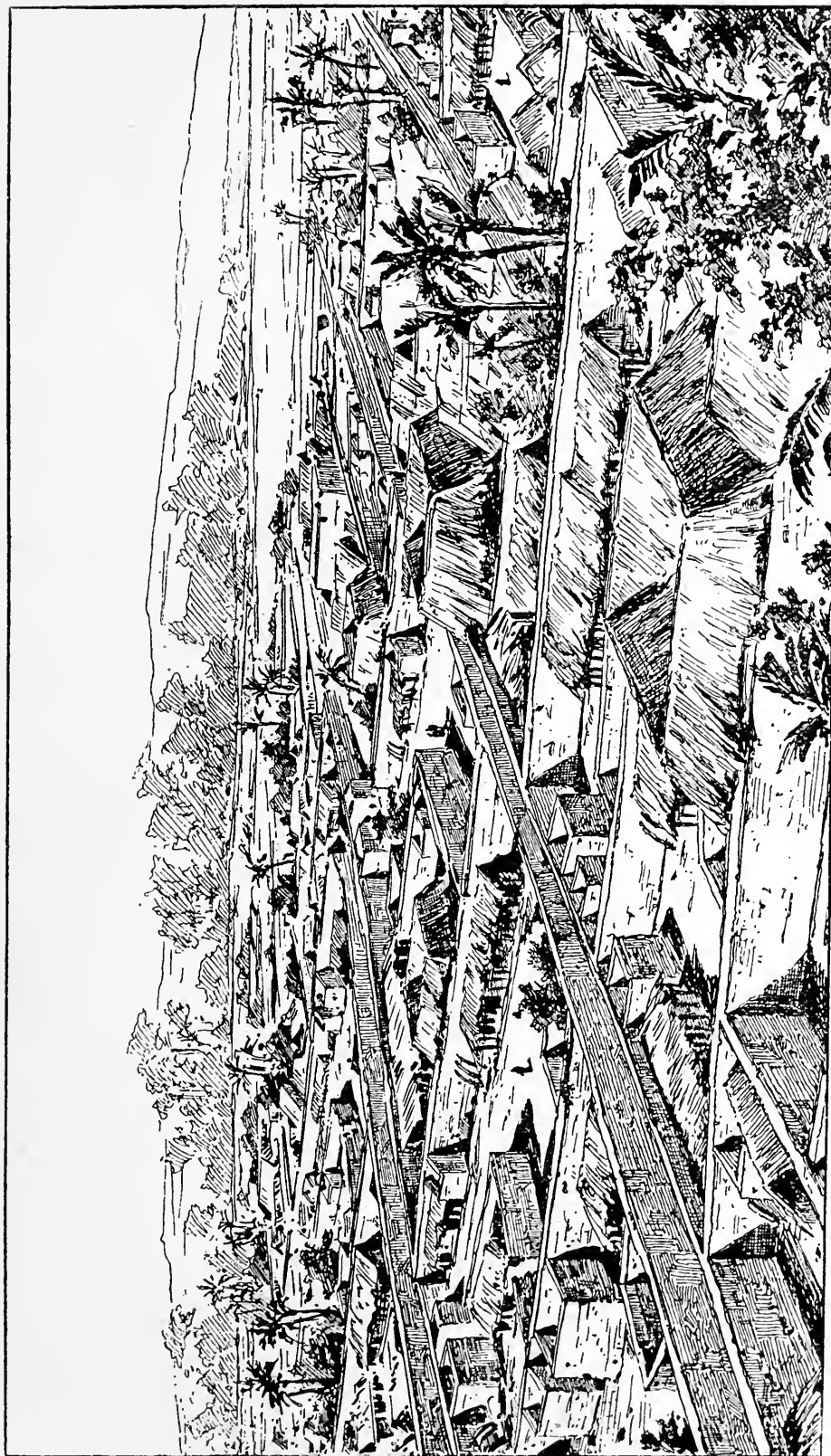


FIG. 173.—View of Benin City, from a sketch by an English officer. Globus, Vol. lxxii. 27th Nov., 1897.

Wright, to which are added the words "The city consists of a number of huge compounds of oblong shape, surrounded by walls made of red mud."

A view of the city (fig. 173) "from a sketch by an English Officer," appeared in *Globus* (Vol. lxxii., 1897, p. 310); at first sight it appears to be almost identical with that given by Mr. Wright. Both these illustrations have, however, the same obvious errors, viz., the tops of the walls are not covered with thatch and the out-

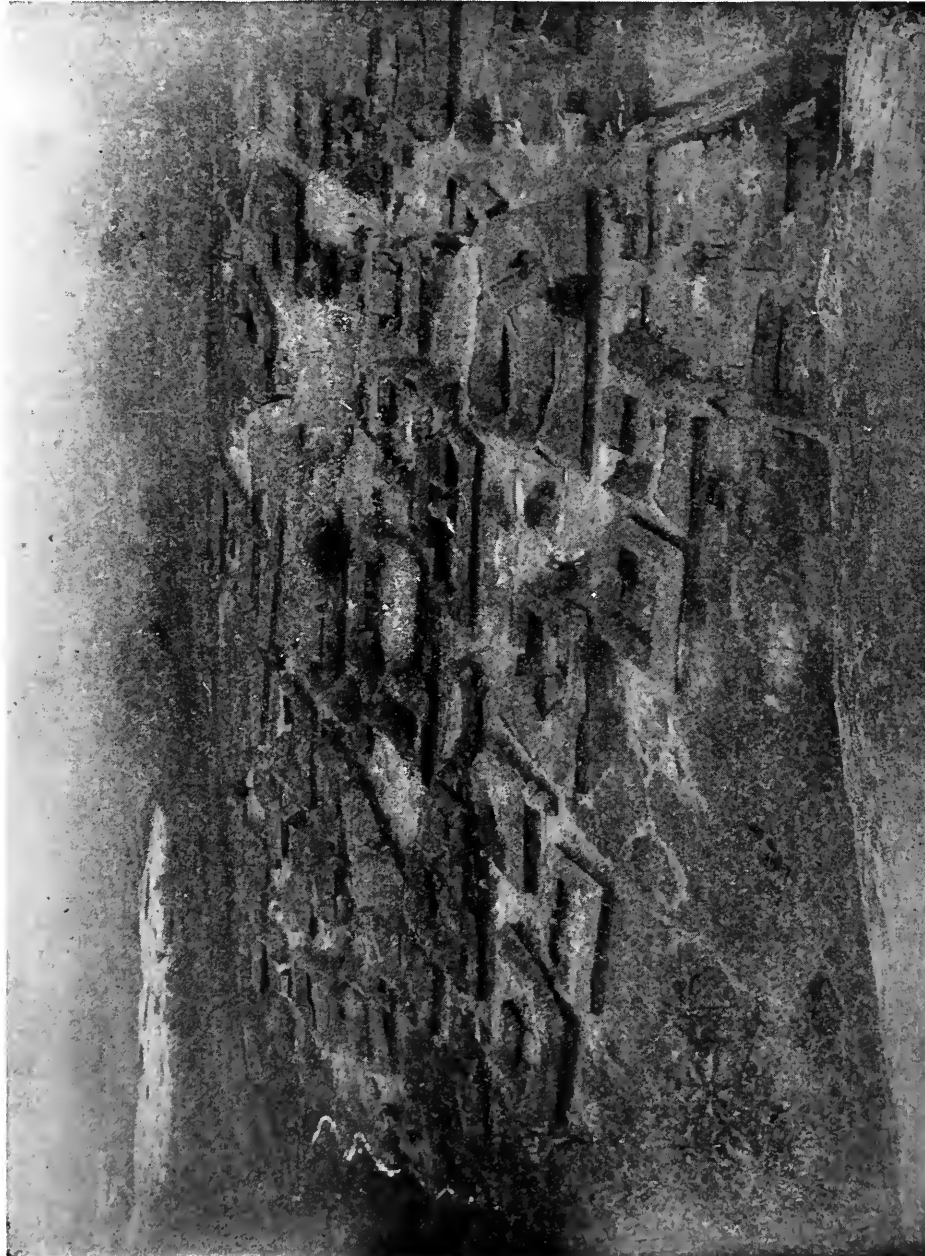


FIG. 174.—View of Ede Ado, a Yoruba town, from a photograph taken from a rock about 300 feet above the level of the town, by the Rev. J. T. F. Halligey.

lines of the streets are too straight. The illustration on p. 165 (fig. 163) from a photograph taken by Dr. Allman, Chief Medical Officer, Niger Coast Protectorate, shows how the walls are, if not actually thatched, at least covered with grass or leaves to prevent damage by rain. Were the walls to be left without this capping they would soon be washed away. As regards the straightness of the streets it is one of the characteristics of a negro builder or joiner that he cannot make a straight

line, and Europeans find it a most difficult matter to get him to make one even tolerably straight. Otherwise I am informed the two illustrations give fairly accurate views of the city. The little windowless store-closets which, according to Burton, always lead out of the sitting room, do not however, appear to do so in the above illustrations, nor have we in any case any indication of the grooving to resemble brickwork. For comparison with the above illustrations I give one of a view (fig. 174) of the little town of Ese Ado in Yoruba land, (the Binis are closely allied to Yorubas) taken from a rock at a height of about 300 feet. by the Rev. J. T. F. Halligey, who has kindly placed it at my disposal. As to the manner in which walls are built in the Yoruba country he tells me: "The only method I have noticed in building walls is for the builders to take large lumps of clay, about as large as a human head, and with as much force as possible fling the lump on the wall. As he goes round the wall a course is formed, not very regular as you may suppose, but still the courses are very plainly seen. Before the clay has fully hardened the two sides of the rising wall are pared with a cutlass. Sometimes the inside is also plastered over, in which case the wall courses are then covered."<sup>1</sup>

The general style of the architecture of the habitations so far described, is met with as already indicated almost throughout Yoruba, and in slightly modified form right across the country as far as the Kameruns. Thus writing as far back as 1848, W. F. Daniell (*Jour. Ethnol. Soc.*, 1848, I., pp. 219, 290), after calling attention to the inferior workmanship of the houses of the natives of the middle and upper classes of Old Calabar, says:—

"The peculiar novelty of these tenements, is the different courtyards, or open compartments, in which all are more or less sub-divided, the whole of which if thrown open would occupy no small space of ground. Evidence of laborious and not unskilful attempts to bestow an air of comfort are perceptible on all sides, and more than ordinary attention appears to have been paid to their constant purification and cleanliness. These courts are usually of a quadrangular form, the first or external one having a small doorway or porch for the purpose of ingress or egress. Some are fitted up with a series of petty chambers close to the walls, in which the inferior household slaves live, and others have a matted roof projecting a few feet from the wall surrounding the area, which forms, if I may use the expression, a kind of sheltered corridor. In the centre of these courts the ground is excavated to about a foot in depth, corresponding to the eaves of the roof; the remaining space being elevated in the same proportion by a hardened composition of sand and clay, much employed by most of the natives of Western Africa. Adjoining these clayey partitions, and almost encompassing the square, the cement work [*sic*] is further elevated to the height of two feet, and dyed on the top a deep jet black. On important occasions it is covered with mats and grass cloths. The inner surface of the walls is adorned with curious and elaborate arabesque designs, in which red, yellow, black, and white pigments are blended with all the artistic skill of native professors. In the middle portion of the excavated area of the inner square, there is frequently planted a small tree, which bears a beautiful purple campanulate flower. At its root is always embedded a skull, near which are small bowls with other Egbo symbols. This human memento is occasionally to be found at the entrance of the interior chambers of the courtyards."

<sup>1</sup> This method of flinging lumps of clay is that adopted in the fire-clay works of Halifax and elsewhere, when heavy articles such as mangers are being made.



The northern limits of the Yoruba style of architecture may probably be taken where that of the conical huts commences; thus at the extreme end of the Niger Coast Protectorate that limit would be between lats.  $8^{\circ}$  and  $9^{\circ}$  on the westward trend of the Cross River, where Captain Beecroft's party were surprised to see conical huts (*Jour. Roy. Geogr. Soc.*, XIV., 1844, p. 275). On the east we have this style of architecture in the nearer back country of the Kameruns, as shown by Captain Hutter (fig. 175). On the Niger the limit would be at Adda Mugu, considerably north of Abo, where as Allen and Thompson found in 1841, "the huts were, for the first time, of the peculiar form which prevails in the interior, namely, circular, with high, conical thatched roofs. All below this town are square or oblong." (*Narrative of Expedition*, 2 vols. London, 1848, I., 274). To the west the northern limit is apparently in one locality at Egbe, in the Yagbe district, N.E. of Aiede, as can be gathered from Capt. D. J. May's journal of his travels in Yoruba and Nupe countries in 1858.<sup>1</sup> (*Jour. Roy. Geogr. Soc.* XXX., 1860). At Ilesha (N.E. of Ibaden and Abbeokuta) he says: "The Chief's house is imposing in height and size, regularly built, and really looks like a palace in Africa. After half an hour's waiting in an outer courtyard, surrounded by a numerous and anxious crowd, I was ushered farther into its recesses into a spacious square, with a piazza round it." (pp. 217-8). At Aiedi (still N.E.) "The Chief was seated under a piazza on one side of a spacious square . . . I was desired to seat myself under the piazza opposite him, and our conversation was then conducted by a party of three or four running

between us." (p. 224). Egbe (in Yagbe district, N.E. of Aiede) consists of two distinct parts, approaching the style of the towns on the Kwora in rudeness and closeness of construction, and general foulness, and showed a curious amalgamation of the round built houses of that locality with the square characteristic of the interior; and as a farther symptom of approach to the river I observed armlets of plates of ivory superseding the solid ones" (p. 225).<sup>2</sup>

There is consequently a limit to this form of building to the north and east. In the north-west (Western Sudan) there is quite a different style of architecture. Take

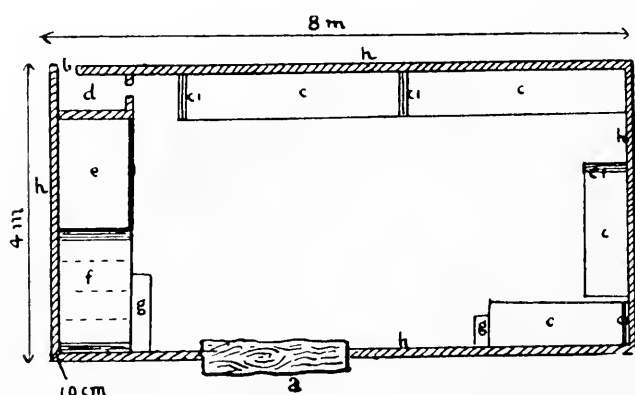


FIG. 175.—Plan of a Banyang compound (Lat.  $6^{\circ}+$ ) *a* threshold, *b* postern, *c* mud divan with *c*<sup>1</sup> arm rests, *d* closet, *e* hearth, *f* mud seat, *g* mud footstool, *h* walls, *t* hard floor a few centimeters above the street level, Capt. Franz Hutter Nord-Hinterland von Kamerum, Brunswick, 1902, p. 277.

<sup>1</sup> The Dahomey King's compounds at Calinma, south of Abomey, were very much like the Benin compounds, but curiously enough, at Abomey the king's bedchamber was a circular detached room with a conical roof (see Norris pp. vii-viii).

<sup>2</sup> Naturally on frontier towns the architecture would be mixed, for instance R. A. Freeman writes of Bontuku:—"It was very curious to observe how each of the builders adhered to his national type of dwelling—reproducing in miniature the houses that were to be found in his native town or village. Thus the Fantis raised little oblong huts with high pitched roofs and gable ends; the Houssas, little beehive-shaped dwellings with a small hole for a door way, while others built circular huts of a conical form with high pointed roofs." (*Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, London, 1892, p. 345).



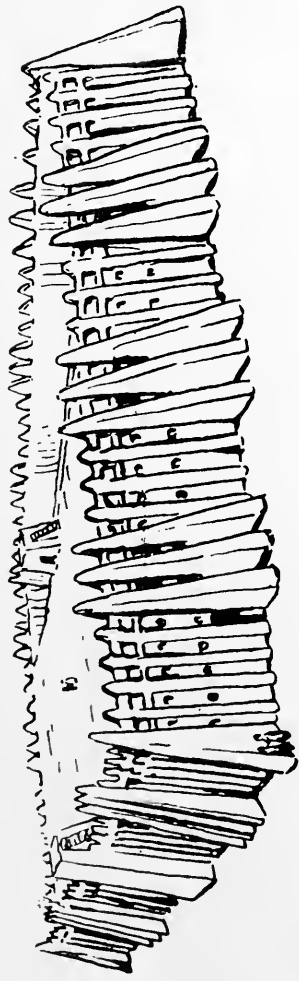


FIG. 176.—The old Mosque (restored) at Timbuktu. Felix Dubois, Tombouctou la Mysterieuse, Paris, 1897, p. 179.

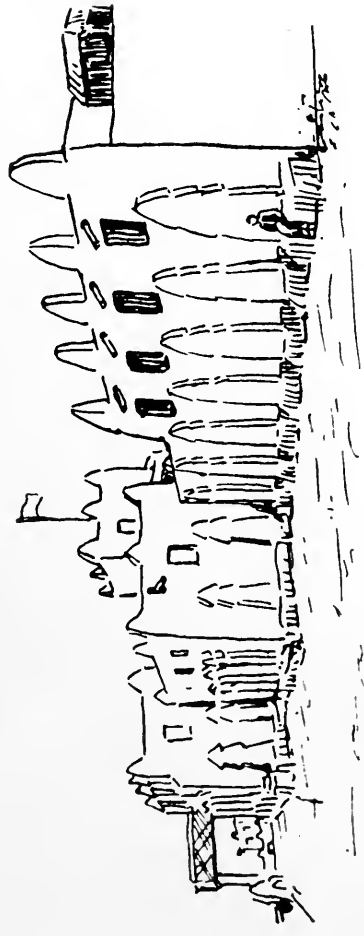


FIG. 177.—The town of Segou, on the Niger above Timbuktu. Felix Dubois, Tombouctou la Mysterieuse, Paris, 1897, p. 82.

Series of illustrations of buildings in the Sudan, to show the wide difference in the architecture of the Bini or the true negroes.

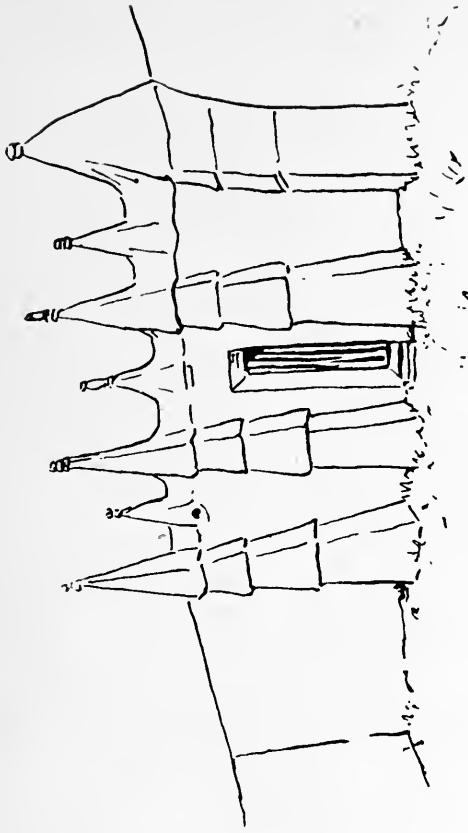


FIG. 178.—A Bonduku habitation (exterior), North West of Ashanti, Capt. Binger Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée, Paris, 1892, Vol. II., p. 163.

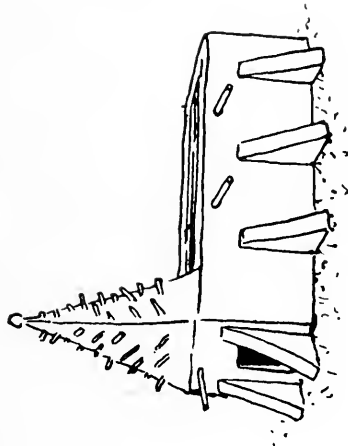


FIG. 179.—A Salaga Mosque, North of Ashanti. Capt. Binger Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée, Paris, 1892, Vol. II., p. 95.

for instance the walls of Segou, or of the Mosque at Timbuctu (figs. 176 and 177). No buildings could be more unlike. The Western Sudan buildings have more batter and the finish is vertical, as shown by the flat pillars or pinnaced buttresses, which as in our Gothic may have been introduced because the building material is in itself not sufficiently cohesive, or to strengthen the walls where windows are introduced. Captain Binger (*Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, Paris, 1892) shows these buttresses to be widespread by the numerous illustrations he gives (figs. 178 and 179), but they are quite unknown in Benin. On the other hand, there is a superficial resemblance between Captain Binger's view of Kong (I., 295) and Dr. Dapper's view of Benin, due no doubt to the pyramid-like towers common to both towns in the illustrations. The suggestion that the Benin habitations have architecturally a Roman origin seems precluded by the fact that they are cut off to the north by the Haussa conical type, although of course the Haussa might have not been originally where they now are, so that an outler of Roman civilisation might have stretched right down to Benin. But these hypotheses are too remote for us to base any serious conclusions on them.

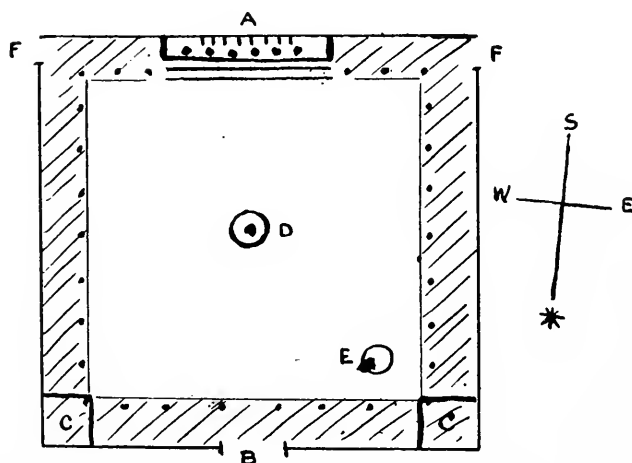


FIG 180. Sketch plan of the king's compound by Mr. E. P. S. Roupell.

- A Altar.
- B Big door.
- C Little huts for guardians.
- D Small round mud altar.
- E Well; the ground here caked like cement with spilled blood.
- F Wooden side doors.

This sketch is typical. There were about thirteen such compounds each sacred to a defunct king, and the whole space so occupied formed the king's quarters.

Messrs. Reed and Dalton (*Antiquities* p. 8) after dismissing the notion of a Roman origin for the open court, think it "is more natural to suppose that it arose from the need of ventilating and lighting windowless rooms, or from the practice of running a verandah round a small courtyard, into which the doors of inner apartments opened. I am more inclined to think it arose from a modification of what is now well-known as the Gold Coast house, described as follows by Geo. Macdonald: "Many huts require no door, the fourth side of the house being entirely open to the winds of heaven. When this is the case the habitation consists very often of three or four distinct huts enclosing a compound with their open sides turned towards the centre, the whole being enclosed with a pallisade of bamboo with a door or gate at one angle. In the centre of this compound the cooking is done, etc., etc." (*The Gold Coast*, London, 1898, p. 81). A development of such a compound by means of a fourth house and the drainage of the centre brings us to the Benin habitations. That such buildings are likewise common to the Gold Coast is shown in the illustrations kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Graham Nicholas.

But the chief point of interest is not so much the outward appearance as the arrangement of the inhabited building inside the four large walls, and here we leave

the negro methods and strangely enough, enter upon foreign ground. In spite of the outward resemblance the enclosures, for instance at Ese Ado, are simply oblong structures with a covered lean-to all round, like the ordinary Benin compounds, but in so far as the internal arrangements, that is to say the actual dwelling-houses, are

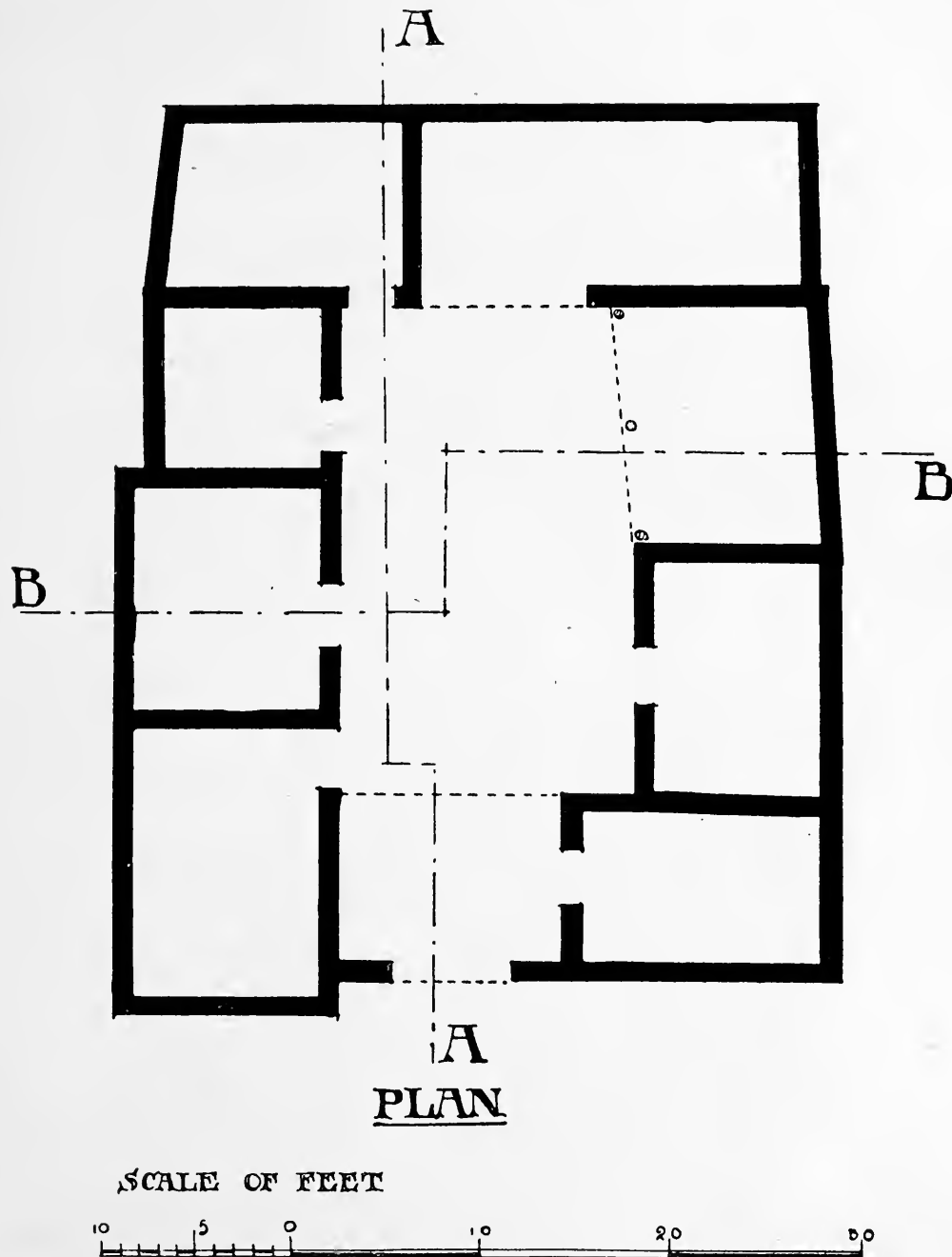
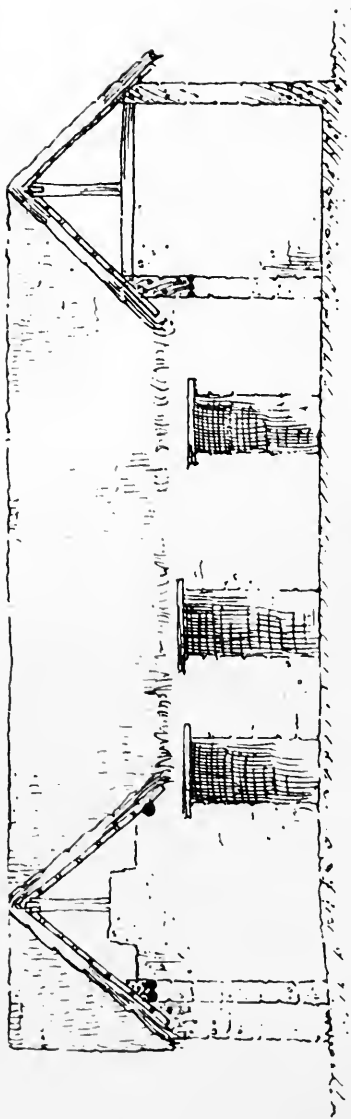


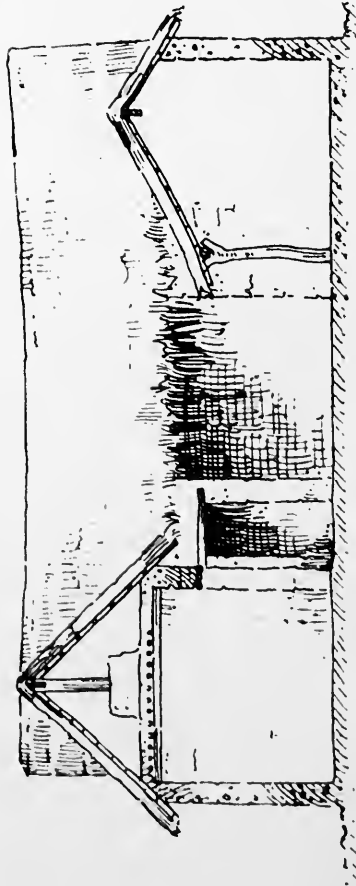
FIG. 181.—Plan of an ordinary well-to-do negro's house, at Labadie, Gold Coast, typical of the country, made from the actual dwelling by Mr. Graham Nicholas, late Public Works Department, Gold Coast. Note "The outlines have been drawn straight, but it must be remembered practically all the lines are crooked, as no untrained negro is able to make a straight line." G.N.

concerned, the Benin arrangements are not met with in Yorubaland excepting in the town of Onde, which is close to Benin. It is therefore most probable that we have to look for a Portuguese origin of what first struck Burton as being Roman.



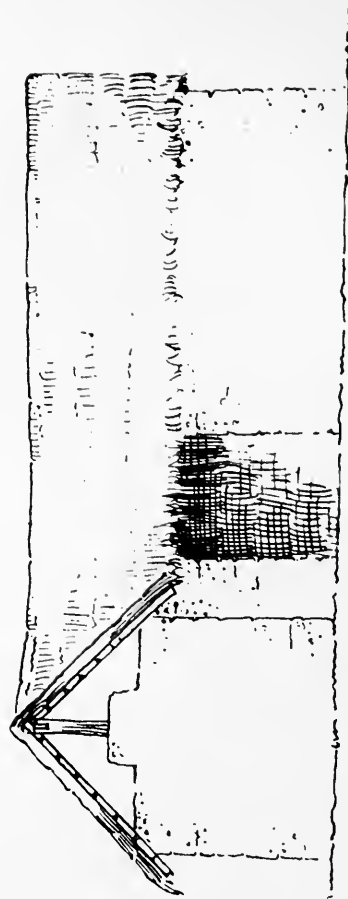
SECTION AA

FIG 182.



SECTION BB

FIG. 183.



ELEVATION

FIG 184.

Figs. 182, 183, 184.--Sections and elevation of the dwelling at Labadie, by Mr. Graham Nicholas.

Of these internal arrangements Mr. Punch writes me: "There was usually an entrance court giving on to the street by a big door. There were two recesses as in the drawing. In one were ranged the lares and penates, and the father of the household celebrated yearly rites in memory of his father. Through the other recess, by a door, entrance was gained to the first patio or reception room. The thatch sloped down to the centre and drained into the cistern, exactly as one sees in the houses of Pompeii. The drains were made very ingeniously. While the house was being made, a gutter was dug from the central water tank, through the floor and under the wall of the house. Stems of pawpaws (*Carica papaya*) were cut and laid in the drains and then earth was stamped, filling up the gutter to the level of the floor. In a few days, the pawpaw stems, being very succulent, shrunk in drying and were easily drawn out, leaving a good drain pipe.

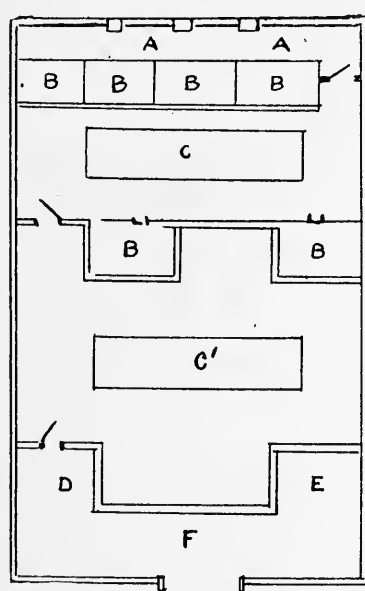


FIG. 185. Sketch plan of a typical Benin house by Mr. C. Punch.

- A Cooking places.
- B Store rooms.
- C Pluvium in private quarters.
- C' Pluvium in Reception Court.
- D Porch.
- E Juju altar.
- F Entrance court.

"The first room was the largest and seemed to be public property for all the world and his wife. Slaves and the lower members of the family lived in it, and strangers camped there, prisoners were chained to the floor, and in Ewagwe's house there was a ju-ju altar, and I was much struck by his having a tame parrot on a tree in the bath, tank, or whatever one calls it. Two kinds of trees were grown in these places: *Newbouldia laevis*, the akoko, common as a boundary mark in Yoruba, sacred to the iron god, Ogun; one also frequently met with *Erythrina umbrosa*, with its panicles of crimson blossom, sacred in Yorubaland to the hunters' fetish.

"In the second room the family lived, though the women had a house of their own built on a similar plan, but enclosed in the same compound. The divisions between the rooms were wide, and contained in their width either stoves or sleeping alcoves, exactly recalling again the cubicles in a Pompeian house. The store-rooms and alcoves were ceiled with rafters, and over the rafters split bamboos, and then clay forming almost fireproof closets.

"The stores were locked with native locks, the principle of which was a bolt working through staples. The key was a piece of iron with a piece bent at right angles. The keyhole was at different lengths above the bolt, so that only the key of a right length would reach the bolt. Practically I do not think the locks were much

protection. The alcoves used for sleeping contained all kinds of weird jujus, and the ceiling and jujus were painted black with a kind of pitch got from the ground, probably the same as mentioned in the digging of the pits in the king's compound.



FIG. 186.



FIG. 187.

FIGS. 186 and 187.—Ivory carvings said to be door bolts from the king's compound, Benin City. The bolt (fig. 186) is 12 in. (30.5 cm.) long, the bolt (fig. 187) 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (24.8 cm.) long.

“The master of the house often had a third room where he could be quite quiet and private. At the end was an open court with cooking stoves, &c., and often a



small garden in which tobacco was grown for home use. The doors were hung as in the sketch, the socket at the bottom being either the bottom of a glass bottle or else a split coconut shell. They were made of rough hewed slabs nailed with iron spikes. A cord of tie tie (*Calamus Barter*) ran through a staple and supported a block of wood, the weight of which kept the door closed."

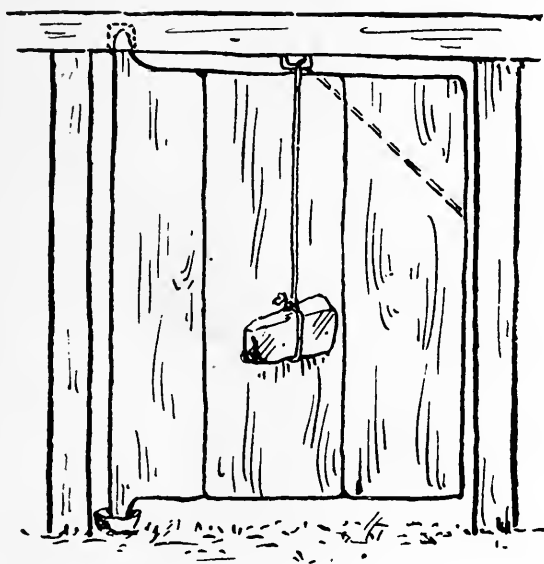


FIG. 188. Sketch by Mr. C. Punch to illustrate doors in use.

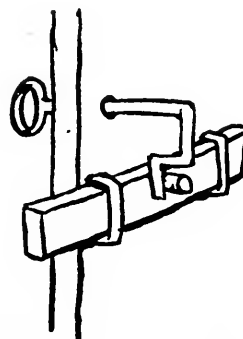


FIG. 189. Sketch to illustrate door key and bolt by Mr. C. Punch.

Coming to the question of the towers, turrets or pyramids, Mr. C. Punch writes me: "There was at one of the compounds when I was there, the remains of a two-storied gateway which might look like a tower. The towers might possibly be a piece



FIG. 190.—Sketch plan of an entrance gateway, by Mr. C. Punch. Compare this with the gateway in Mr. Granville's illustration fig. 193.

of imagination founded on the high pitched thatch roof such as you show in fig. 191. Speaking of this, the high pitched gables are a feature on the Alaffin's house at Awyaw, and also in Ife, the sacred city of the Yorubas. I think they are called Kolbe, and are made by simply raising the ridge post at one end to form a very high gable, in memory of a defunct king. They are not really impressive, but might be taken for towers by a strong imagination, or these structures may have had their origin in the roofs of the entrance gates. The entrances to the compounds and the gates from one compound to another were in my time always unroofed square chambers higher than the rest of the walls. It might therefore be that in former times these chambers were roofed, and, if so, the roofs might have had a pyramid form and appeared as turrets, the royal emblem the bird being placed on top.

The big ditch mentioned by D.R. is thus spoken of by Roupell officials: "The big ditch was dug by Oguola. He and his people came from God. When God had

born them, Oguola called his boys and saw they were very plenty, and he had no work for them to do. Then he told them to dig the ditch round the town. He did not dig it for war, but so that men might see it when he was dead, and say: see the ditch Oguola dug—we do not know why it is stronger and deeper on the northern side of the town, so he dug it and so it is." The wall and ditch are not mentioned in the Portuguese chronicles in so far as I can ascertain, but of Gwato Pereira (Esmiraldo, p. 72) says it has "no walls but a deep fosse all round"; as Gwato, the trading port of Benin, was entrenched, it is not likely that the larger city would be in an undefended state and hence the official implied statement, that the walls and ditch were built before the advent of Europeans, is no doubt correct. Landolphe, as we have seen, says it was 20 feet deep.

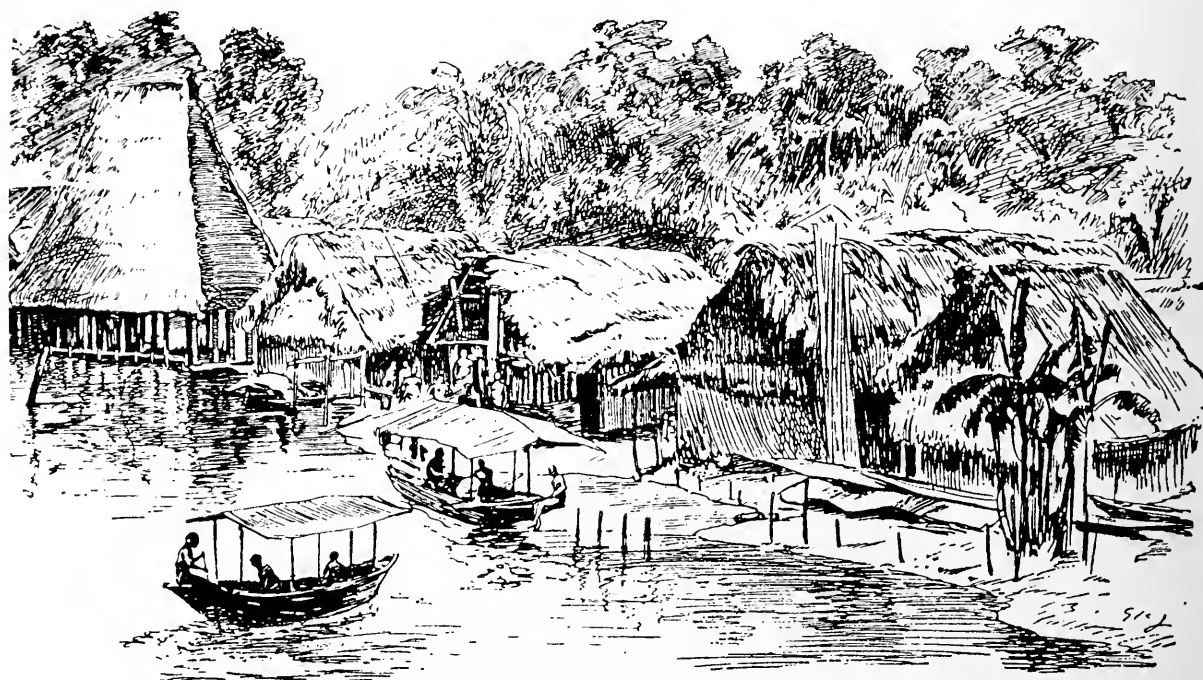


FIG. 191.—A Jekri village on the Benin river, with Yoruba building on left hand side. *Daily Graphic*, Jan. 13th, 1897. The high-pitched roof of such a building may have something to do with all we read about towers, turrets, pyramids, and spires in the various descriptions of Benin.

"This ditch," Mr. Roupell tells me, "is much deeper on the northern side than on the southern side. This one would account for by the fact that if any attack was threatened, it would come from the side of the Kukurukus—the northern neighbours. Judging from the size of the immense trees growing inside it, it must be very old. It is particularly steep and deep in the rear of the king's compound. Travelling in a northerly direction from Benin towards the Ekiti country, several more smaller ditches are passed, cut at right angles to the road; these may in former times have surrounded towns and villages.

"So too," says Dr. F. N. Roth, "on the Ologbo road to Benin the Punitive Expedition came across a deep trench about three miles from the king's compound. It was so very evenly made that several of us thought we had reached the old ditch round Benin city. It is approximatively of the section shown (fig. 192). At another place about twelve miles from the king's compound, some members of the

expedition marched for several miles in a ditch of similar formation to the above."

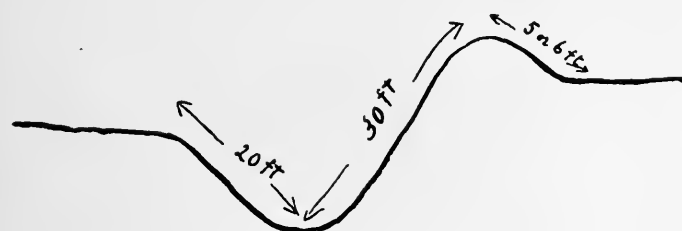


FIG. 192.—Approximate section of ditch round Benin city.

"There was also a big ditch crossing the road between Benin and Ugwini, about seven miles from the city. It was said to have been made by a Benin king to ward off the attacks of the Ugwini people, who at one time were powerful, but who in these latter days were of no importance, and

who were absolutely oppressed and tyrannised over by the Ukoba" (C. Punch).



FIG. 193.—Ruined doorway leading from one compound into another in Benin City.  
From a photograph by Mr. R. K. Granville.



FIG. 194.—Carved Tusk.



FIG. 195.—Carved Tusk.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CARVED WORK<sup>1</sup>

Huge carved tusks—Two grades of carving—Carving tools (196)—Carved ivory staff—Sphyrelaton work—Ivory masks (199)—Embryo scroll work—Leopard mask—Ivory statuettes—Carved ivory box (201)—Ivory armlets—Ivory sistra (205)—Coco nut decoration—Pressure drum—Carved wood work (209)—Horseman—Casket—Looking glass—Absence of floral ornamentation—Zoological forms—Progress or degradation—Foreign elements—Characteristics of Bini carving (213)—Primitive designs—Belongs to age of realistic representation

As the art of carving in ivory and wood had attained a fairly high stage of progress in Benin, it will not be out of place to devote a few pages especially to it. Among the large variety of curiously carved objects discovered in Benin not the least curious are the huge carved tusks, of which large numbers were brought home when the Punitive Expedition had done its work. Reference to these tusks has been made in Chapter VI., on Fetish and Kindred Ceremonies. Most of the tusks found *in situ* were covered with a thick coating of congealed human and animal blood; other tusks were found buried, some of them in a very decayed condition. The tusks vary in length up to 6 feet and over, and are in themselves magnificent specimens of ivory, speaking eloquently of the pacific life elephants must have led in former times to have enabled them to live long enough to produce such splendid ivory.<sup>2</sup> The ornamentation to which the large tusks have been subjected, while preserving their form, is of two grades: the one severely plain and the other extremely decorative in its effect. The former consists of a series of three to five incised bands of plait pattern, a design very common in West Africa, placed at intervals (fig. 194), the bands diminishing in width as they approach the tip of the tusk. The embellishment is consequently plain but elegant, and does not call for further remark. The other grade (fig. 195) consists in covering the whole tusk with a succession of boldly-carved,

<sup>1</sup> A portion of this chapter appeared in *The Studio*.

<sup>2</sup> "There are few places in Western Africa, from Sierre Leone to the Cape of Good Hope, but where this article, obtained from the elephant and seamorse or sea-cow, is to be purchased, although more abundantly in some places than others. At the different towns on the windward coast a small quantity only is to be procured. The country extending from Cape Palmas to Cape Three Points trades in this article to a considerable amount, and from the latter place to Accra the trade in it is very limited. From Accra to Bonny the trade in it is again extensive, particularly at Popo and Benin. Cameroons is celebrated for its ivory, which is of a very superior quality, being less porous and more free from flaws than that which is obtained at the former place. A very considerable quantity is procured on the coast of Angola, particularly at Ambrize, Loango, and Majumba." Capt. John Adams, Cape Palmas to the River Congo, London, 1823.

Bird brought home twenty-eight tusks on his first expedition. Landolphe on one occasion in 1789 sent home 20,000 pounds of ivory (p. 101), and remarks on another occasion that the king had over 3,000 tusks piled up in one of his courts, of which Landolphe obtained one weighing fifty pounds.

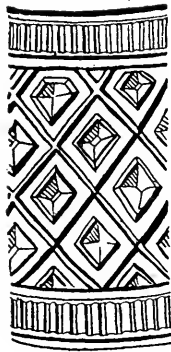


FIG. 196.—  
Carving on tusk.

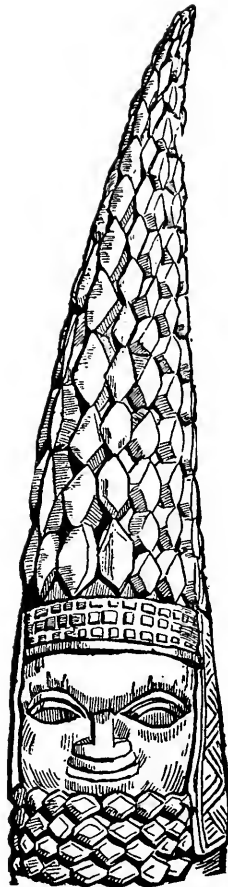


FIG. 197.—Tip  
of carved tusk.



FIG. 198.—  
Tip of tusk,  
front view.



FIG. 199.—Carving on tusk.



FIG. 199.—  
Tip of tusk,  
side view.





FIG. 200.—Carved figures on tusk.



FIG. 201.—Carved figure on tusk.



FIG. 202.—Carved figure on tusk.



FIG. 203.—Carved figure on tusk.



FIG. 204.—Carved figure on tusk.

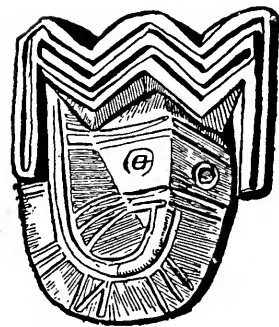


Fig. 205.—Carved figure on tusk.



FIG. 206.—Carvings on tusk.

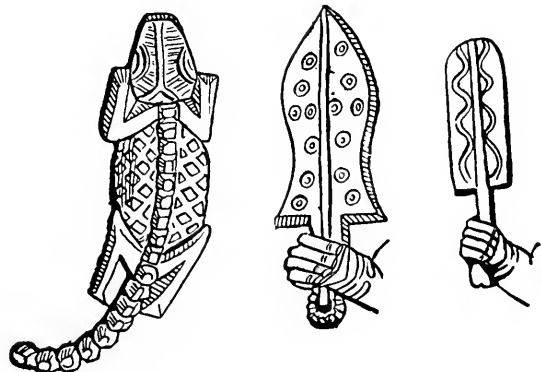


FIG. 207.—Carvings on tusk.

grotesque figures—human, animal, and symbolic—giving the tusks a rich, embroidered-like look, the thick ends being finished off with a suitable diamond-pattern belt (fig. 196), and the tip finished with equally appropriate carvings in the shape of a masle-studded foolscap (fig. 197), or a capsule supported by elongated cowries (figs. 198 and 199). The background appears to be cut out to a uniform depth, and in spite of the multiplicity of figures there is neither overcrowding nor overloading. The *motif*, if such it can be called, of the ornamentation would appear to be partly emblematic of the Bini's belief, and partly representative of the court ceremonial. The chief groups of figures, which repeat themselves with variations, and are placed one above another along the convex surface of the tusk, may be said to be a mythical hybrid, a central figure with lower limbs developing into cat-fish or snakes (fig. 199), or a chief supported by two courtiers (fig. 200), groups which are widely diffused throughout the carvings and castings. These principal figures are surrounded over the whole surface by other figures representing functionaries (figs. 201, 202, 203, 204), while the spaces between are filled in by animal forms, which are more or less of a fetish or symbolic

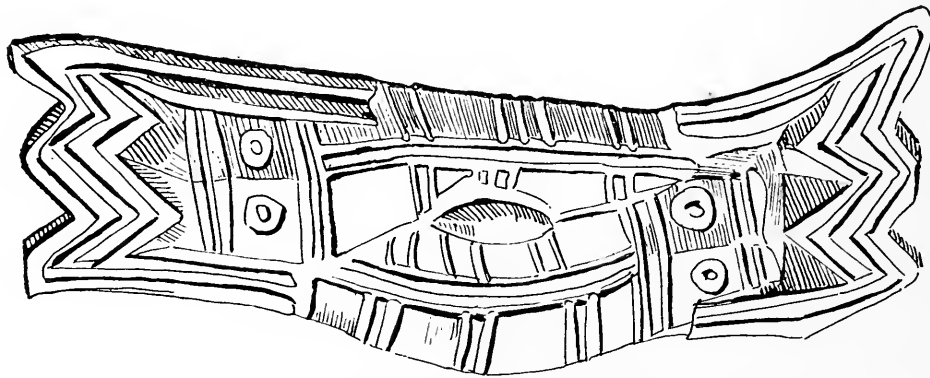


FIG. 208.—Carving representing a double cat-fish

nature, or by heads, rosettes (figs. 205, 206, 207, 208), etc. The whole arrangement is carefully carried out, notwithstanding the crudeness and ruggedness of the carving, and although it can hardly be called a design, where there is such a want of cohesion in its components, the general effect is exceedingly good, and the effect is certainly heightened by the above-mentioned belt tastefully set at the bottom, which gives a decided finish to the whole work.

As to the methods followed in the carving we have no records, but Mr. C. Punch, who saw some tusks half completed, says no tracing or drawing was applied first; the carver, who was a court official, a Ukoba, made his design as he went on, using no model; and the only implements he saw used were jack knives and hammers.

The carved ivory staff (figs. 209 to 211) appears to be a piece of symbolic sculpture probably used as a sceptre, a class of insignia very common in Benin. The execution of the detail is rough—more rugged perhaps than the carved tusks; nevertheless there is considerable originality in the design, and it is especially remarkable as showing perhaps an early stage of the application of hammered metal work to carved work. The central figure represents an elephant supporting an inverted cone, which is furnished with a cup-like excavation at the top, a couple of iron staples, which may have served as the hinge of a lid, being driven through the lip of the cup.



FIG. 209.—Carved ivory staff.



FIG. 210.—Back view.



FIG. 211.—Front view.  
Of Carved Ivory Staff (fig. 209.)



FIG. 212.—  
Carving on  
ivory staff.  
(fig. 209.)

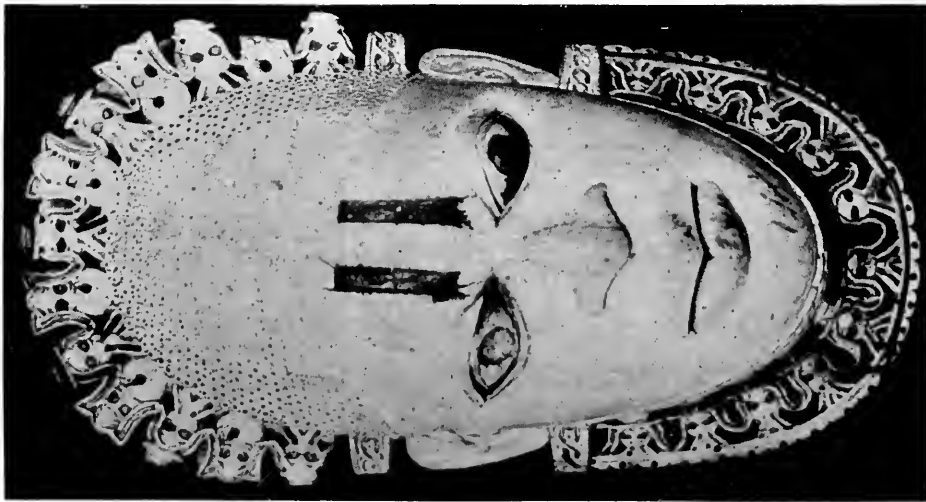


FIG. 213

Carved Ivory Masks.  
From Sir R. Moor's Collection.

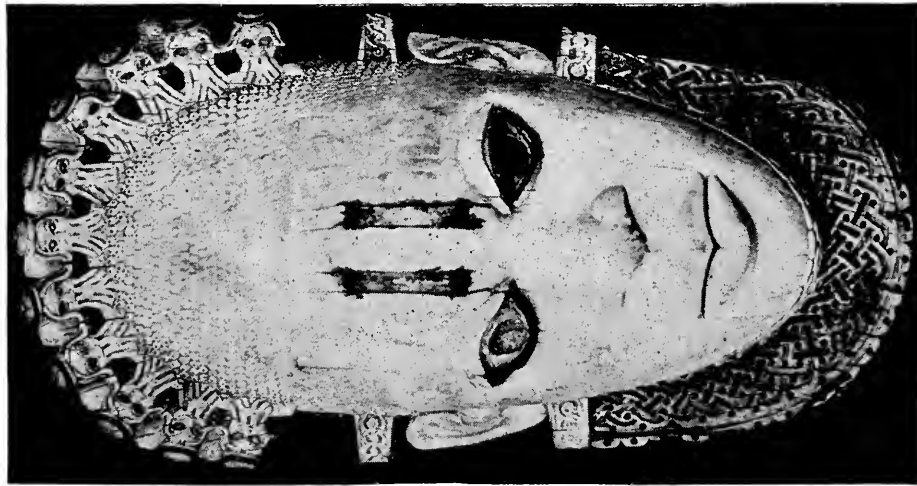


FIG. 214.

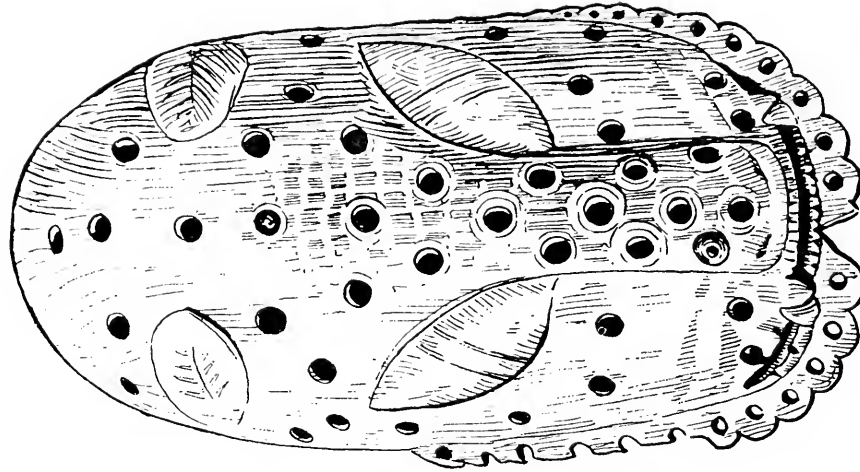


FIG. 215.—Ivory mask, formerly  
in the possession of the late Miss  
M. H. Kingsley.

The elephant is flanked on both sides by a free device, consisting of a conventionalised cat-fish grasped by a hand, of which the forearm terminates in a snake's head holding a smaller cat-fish in its jaws. The elephant's pedestal, carved front and back (the bird on the back (fig. 212) bearing considerable likeness to the well-known birds' beak ornament on Norman doorways), rests on the staff proper, which consists of a large snake's body, of which the head holds another cat-fish. The ornamentation of this large snake is formed by coiling round it the body of a slimmer snake, whose one head holds a hand on the front of the pedestal, whilst its other head, instead of a tail, points downward in the direction of the larger snake's head. The check pattern interstices on the cup and on the elephant's body are filled in with what appear to be exhausted percussion caps rammed tight into position. The forearms, above referred to, flanking the elephant, as well as the staff proper, are twined round with a thin strip of iron; the design on the front of the pedestal appears at one time to have been inset with strips of iron in a similarly crude fashion; in fact, so crudely has this been done that these additions can hardly have beautified the carving to the smallest extent. This iron is not fitted on by rivets or pins, but by means of its ends being rammed tight into small holes, drilled specially somewhat deeper than the background of the carvings to receive them. The only true example of *sphyrelaton* is shown round the neck (fig. 209) of the large snake, where we find a thin brass plate hammered out into scroll pattern; the portion of the ivory immediately underneath the brass is left quite plain. When new, this brass necklace must have enriched the effect of the carving in no small degree.

The two ivory masks (figs. 213 and 214) show elaborate care in the chiselling, and are noteworthy as examples of human European heads breaking into embryo scroll work. This is seen in the tiara, formed of alternate catfishes and human heads round the one face, and of human heads only round the second face. Animals such as catfishes, snakes, etc., are continually met with as decorative adjuncts, apparently quite apart from their fetish or symbolic value, but it is rare to meet with human heads tending to evolve into scroll work, and their appearance here may point to development after the advent of the Portuguese. The pupils of the eyes of the masks are let in with metal, and the foreheads are disfigured by the two coarse grooves once occupied by strips of metal; it has been suggested that the latter insertions are tatu marks, but such cannot be the case as similar insets are met with in widely different objects, as for instance, metal caskets and boxes. The beards of the masks have at some period been adorned with strips of metal similar to those on the ivory staff. The arrangement of the hair over the forehead is curious; it may be intended to represent a mail cap, or it may be meant to show curly hair, pressed like honeycomb or basalt into hexagons.

The leopards mask (fig. 215) in carved ivory is considerably conventionalised. It is, unfortunately, much worn, but it bears evidence of excellent workmanship in the clean way in which the teeth are depicted. The leopard's spots appear to have been indicated by inserting, into holes drilled right through, copper or iron rivets similar to those used for splicing leather belting; one such rivet is still *in situ*.

The armless ivory statuette (fig. 216) is characteristically Bini, and appears to be of considerable age judging by the perished state of the ivory. The loin cloth is ornamented with what look to be masks, and as some of the bronze horsemen from Benin have their jackets similarly decorated, we may conclude that one function of the numerous ivory and brass masks of human, leopard, or crocodile representation



was to serve either as an adornment or fetish on native clothing. It should be mentioned that all the masks in ivory or brass are furnished with lugs or rings for attachment. A comparison of the features of the face of this statuette with those of



FIG. 216.—Ivory Statuette. Mr. R. K. Granville's Collection.



FIG. 217.—Sobo Wooden Fetish. British Museum.

the neighbouring Sobo wooden fetish (fig. 217) shows striking differences in type and execution, and thereby offers a field for speculation as to the causes of these differences. One of the causes is not far to seek. Until the destruction of Benin the Sobos were subject to the city, and their country was a happy hunting-ground for the capture of slaves for human sacrifices, of which we have heard so much, and thus



instead of spreading the partially developed art culture of which she was mistress, Benin used her power to destroy that little which her neighbours once possessed; hence the crude figures of the fetish illustrated. These ivory statuettes were not uncommon, see (fig. 218 and 219).



FIG. 218. — Ivory Kneeling Figure. Height 20 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (52 cm.) Liverpool Museum.

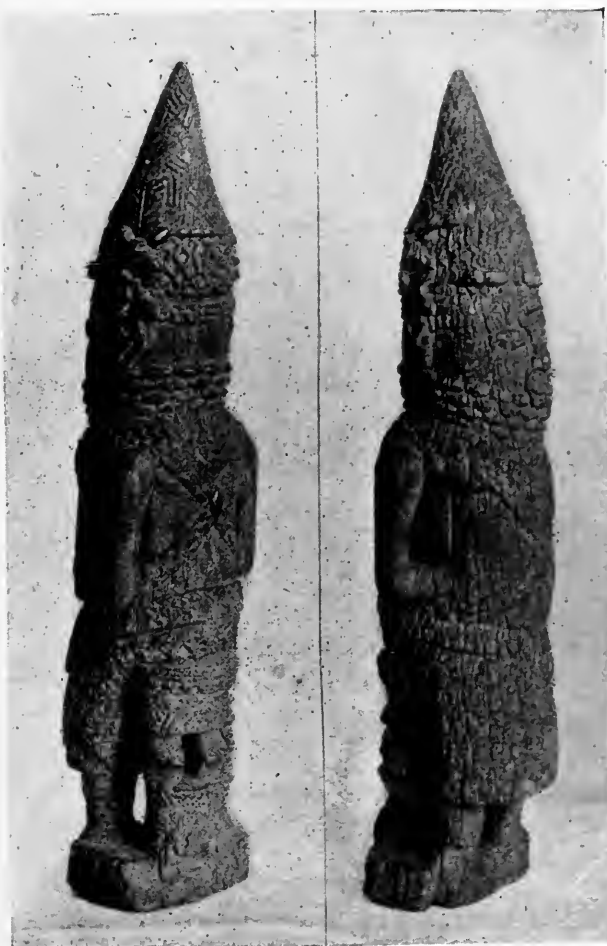


FIG. 219.—Two views of a Carved Ivory Figure (Male). Height 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (39 cm.) Bankfield Museum, Halifax

The carving on the ivory box lid (fig. 220) differs from that on the other objects in its possession of a historical motif, represented by two Europeans falling foul of each other; proving that Europeans were occasionally wanting in the virtue of unanimity, the absence of which is generally considered a characteristic of the negro, and



FIG. 220.—Ivory box with lid. Sir R. Moor's collection.

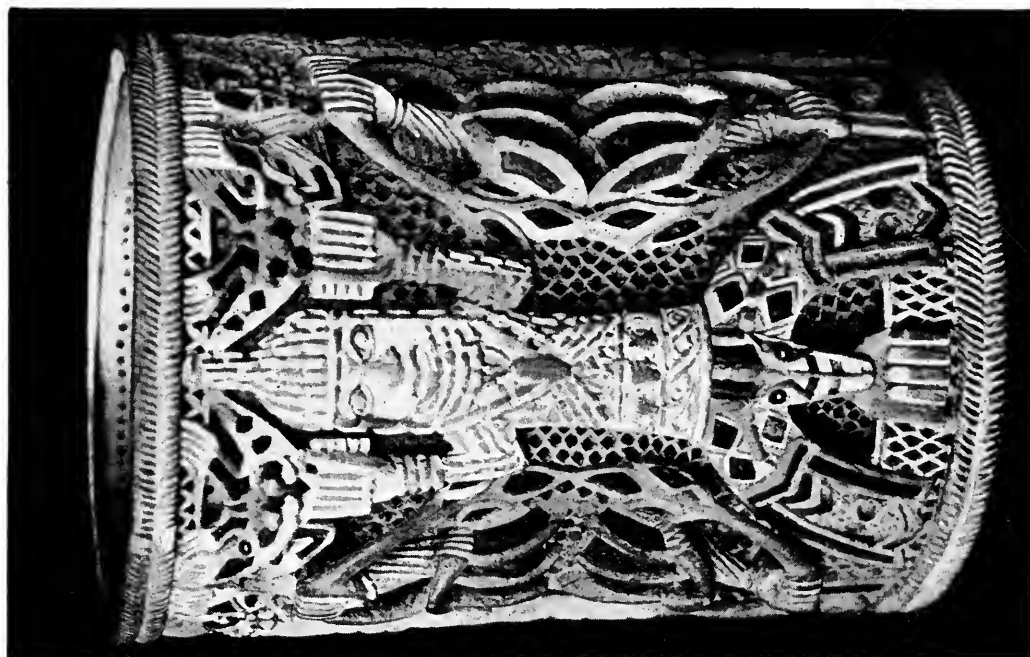


FIG 221.—Carved ivory armlet. Sir R. Moor's collection.

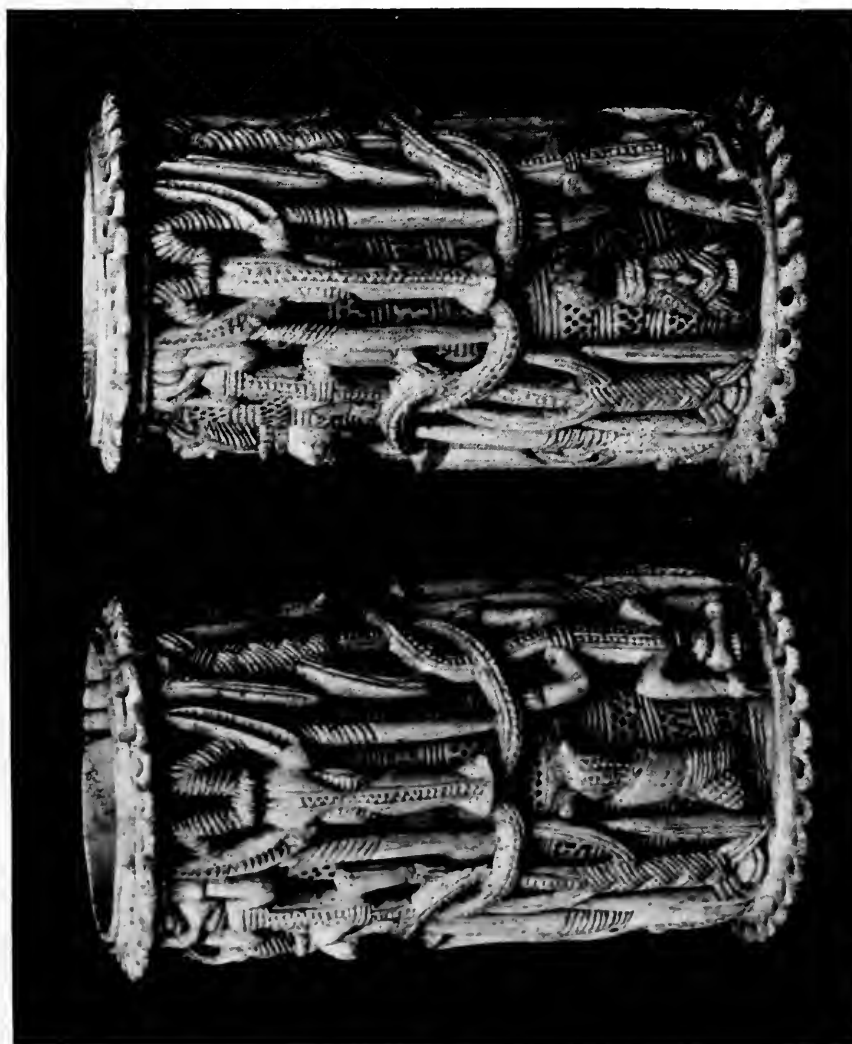


FIG. 222.—Pair of ivory armlets, made of two cylinders, the inner one with only a linear perforated pattern and four figures carved on it, the outer having grotesque human and animal figures in open carving. Height 7½ in. (19cm.) Liverpool Museum.

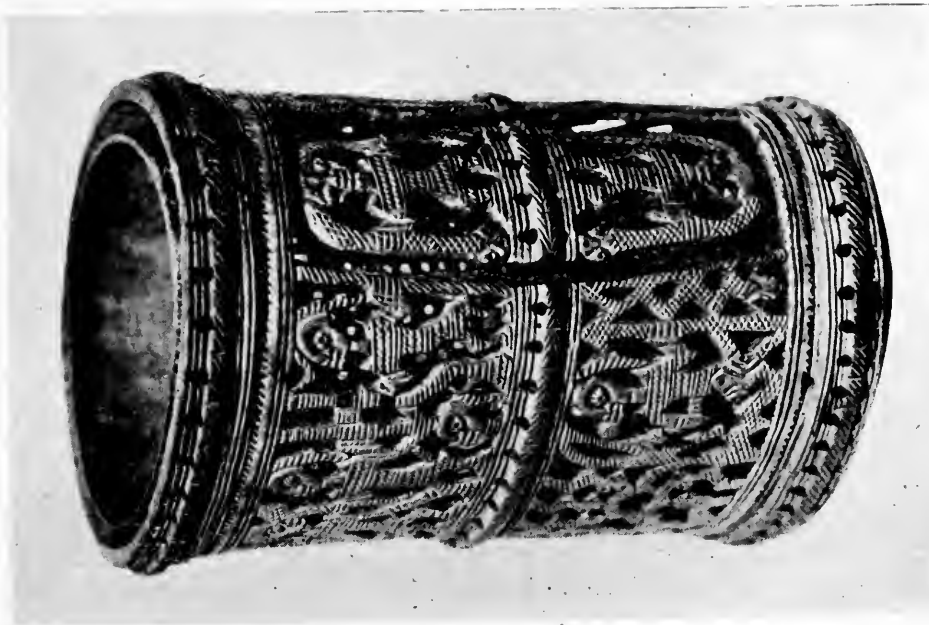


FIG. 223.—Ivory bracelet cut more in the nature of incised work than carved work, in two cylinders. Height 5½ in. (14.9cm.) British Museum.

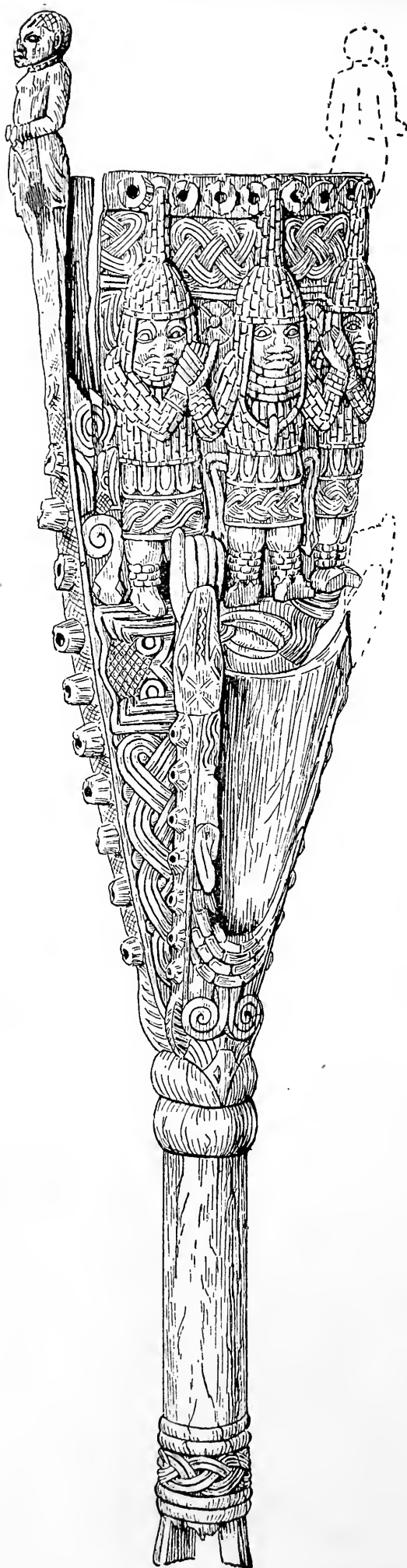


FIG. 224.—Fragment of carved ivory sistrum.



FIG. 225.—Back view of fragment of carved ivory sistrum (fig. 224.)

moreover, accounting to some extent for the loss of prestige and ultimate withdrawal of both Portuguese and Dutch from Benin city. The figures are bold and lifelike, even the unamiable expression on the faces of the combatants is portrayed in a vivid manner.

In fig. 221 which appears to depict only one carved ivory armlet, we have really two armlets, one being carved inside the other, out of the same piece of ivory, with only the space of a knife-blade's thickness between them. When moved, the two armlets rattle against each other. The ornamentation consists of four figures of a king or chief, belonging to the outer armlet, and four sets of two hands (upper and lower) placed between the human figures belonging to the inner armlet. The whole shows rather fertility on the part of the artist in planning a difficult piece, and consummate skill in its elaboration than any beauty in design; it is, nevertheless, a piece of work, which, for the ingenuity displayed in its production, cannot fail to be admired. Figs. 222 and 223 represent similar pieces of work.

The gem of all the carved ivory work is to be seen in the highly ornate fragment (figs. 224 and 225) on an article which had originally the shape of a brass sistrum, consisting of two bell forms, a larger and a smaller, grafted on to one handle. Its delicate treatment differs considerably from the rugged workmanship of the staff above described, but it errs in over-elaboration, and the plait-pattern background, although in low relief, is still too pronounced not to detract from the boldness of the three figures. There are, however, good points, such as the blending of the two bell forms into their common handle, the happy tapering of the ornamentation into the Norman bird's beak, the increasing size of the side cusps as they rise to correspond to the enlarged opening of the bell form, the truthfulness to nature in an essential like the bust of the negro, all of which betoken a fair amount of artistic feeling. The craftsman, who probably designed as he proceeded, must have revelled in the careful execution of the smallest details. A similar article is illustrated in figs. 226 and 227.

Coconuts were another material on which the Bini displayed their ingenuity. On one coconut there are four principal figures of which we give illustrations, viz., a horseman (fig. 229), a drummer (fig. 230), an official (fig. 231) and an oil presser (fig. 232). The horseman has a curious scarf across his shoulder and breast, but he is not enveloped in the usual leopard-skin jacket in which the mounted Bini figures are made to appear; his visible foot rests in a mediæval stirrup, and the horse's head is twisted round in a curious way to face the beholder. The drummer, with a sort of cap of liberty on his head and with a beaming smile on his face, has a Yoruba pressure drum (fig. 233) under his arm, and is holding the native curved drumstick (fig. 234) in his right hand. This drum has a body shaped like an hour-glass, (fig. 235) with skin drawn over both ends, held more or less taut by green hide thongs (fig. 236). When the drummer presses these thongs under his arm to their extreme limit the skin is tightened, so that when struck its pitch is raised about two octaves. The bottom of the coconut (fig. 237) where the feet of the figures meet, is finished off by the representation of a snake; we have the artist's truthfulness to nature in the spur-heeled feet of the figures—spur-heeledness being a characteristic of the Bini and some other West African natives. The top of the stopper is carved into the form of a human face, and is attached to the nut by a well-worn chain of European manufacture. The interest in this carving lies in its demonstration of the adaptability of the native to perform creditably on a material very different from ivory. Fair ingenuity is displayed in the manner in which the figures are grouped on a confined surface without overcrowding; in fact, the feature





FIG. 226.—Ivory carved sistrum 14½ in. (36cm.) long over all. In the possession of E. P. S. Roupell, Esq.



FIG. 227.—Portion of back view of fig. 226.



FIG. 228.—Strikers for the sistrum, fig. 226. Front and side view of top and bottom ends of carved ivory wand with which the ivory sistrum was struck. At a court function when the king was pleased at any occurrence he nodded to an attendant who held the sistrum, and this man then struck it with the wand. 10½ in. (27.3 cm.) long.





FIG. 229.—Carved coco-nut.



FIG. 230.—Carved coco-nut, same as fig. 229.  
Another view.



FIG. 231.—Carved coco-nut, same as fig. 229. Another view.



FIG. 232.—Carved coco-nut, same as fig. 229. Another view.

of the work is the careful distribution and general freedom of treatment. The details of the carving are throughout in low relief, remarkably clean and neat, and of a uniform depth, a characteristic which is also found in the carving of the tusks above described. The same carefulness in execution is shewn by the carving of the coco-nuts illustrated in figs. 238, 239, 240 and 241.

A very large amount of carved wood-work was lost in the conflagration at Benin, and that which has come under our notice cannot be said to rank very high. The execution of the horseman (fig. 242) is crude to a degree, and reminds one very much of the illustrations in Lander's journal of fetishes met with at Kiama (north-west of Rabba and south-west of Boussa). The casket (fig. 243) is a not uncommon general form which varies much in detail; the pedestal represents cowries; the ears are covered with embossed brass work, and there are strips of brass of scroll pattern (fig. 244) running down the bullock's face and round his nose, fastened on by small brass staples. In the looking-glass door-frame (fig. 245) one might almost imagine there was some humorous idea lurking in the figures of the three women and girls, but although the natives are laughter-loving, we have no evidence of their putting this characteristic of theirs into material shape. The figure at the end of the line of six females appears to be that of a guard similar to the one shown at the spigot end facing the reader; so that one is inclined to think that the doorway barred the entrance to the women's apartments. The object of the sliding panel may have been to preserve the glass. There are three different plait patterns, one similar to a Hittite pattern round the frame, and altogether it is a good piece of carved wood work.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of one possible foliage pattern which repeats itself with variations, and the representation of the palm and its supposed offshoot the rosette, appearing on the metal-work dealt with in the next chapter, there is a total absence of any attempt to delineate the flora of the country, hence the development towards conventionalism can only be looked for in the representation of zoological forms. In these there appears to be some progress or degradation, according as to whether the result is distortion in a measure due to incapacity on the part of the workman to draw or carve that which he has set himself to do, as, for instance, in the leopards at the foot of the fetish (fig. 199), or whether the result is modification of a set purpose as in the case of the tiaras of the masks (fig. 213 and 214), which have been executed by competent hands. The representations of the double cat-fish (fig. 208) belong partly to the first series for they are badly carved, and partly to the second, because the way in which the head and tail are juxtaposed show deliberate intention; the snakes and cat-fish, when they appear as recurved human legs (fig. 199), forming the only piece of fancy we have observed, are undoubtedly symbolic and hence deliberate, but belong to neither category.

We must, however, remember that there are considerable foreign elements in Bini decorative art which will account for many contradictions. Part of these elements consist of European forms which the native mind, so prone to copy, has not failed to hand down to us, and part, if not the actual foundation of the art, has

<sup>1</sup> "There were many looking-glasses in wood frames, but most of these were destroyed on the second day of occupation when the conflagration occurred. Where the glass was not square, *i.e.*, irregular or round, etc., the frames had been made to suit the shape of the glass. On one such frame there were carved hatless and bootless natives without mustachios, leading prisoners with chains round their necks; the prisoners were clothed with boots, beefeaters' hats and bold recurving mustachios." (F. N. R).

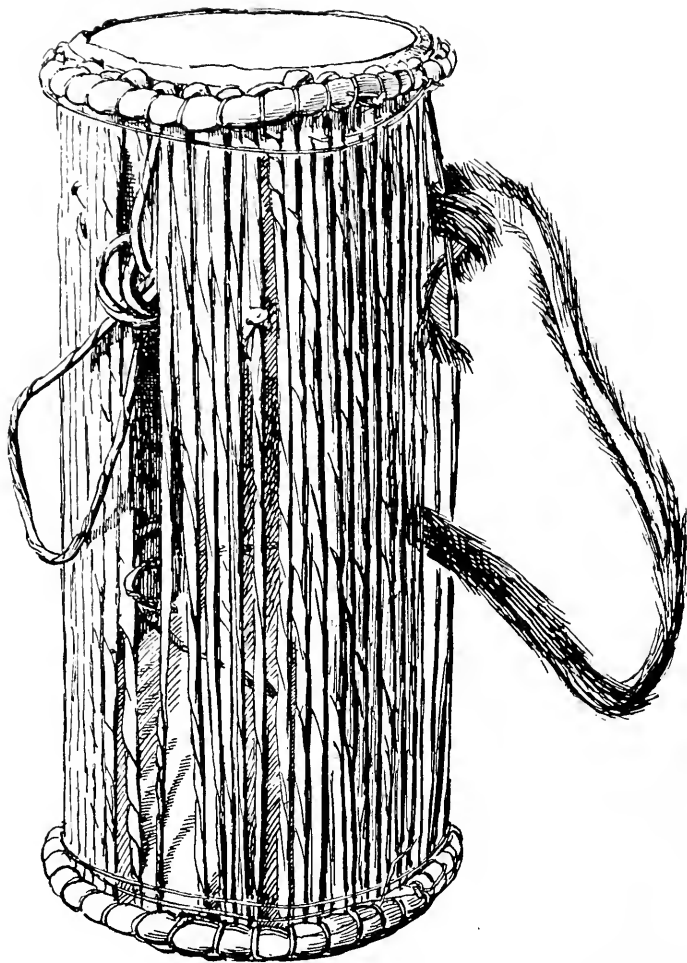


FIG. 233.

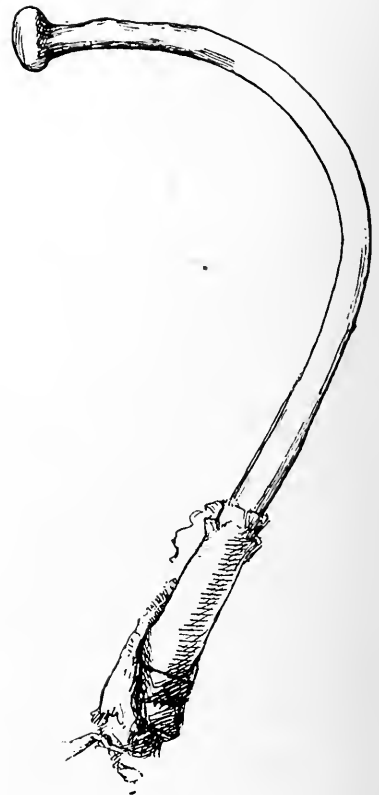


FIG. 234

Pressure Drum (fig. 233), Drumstick (fig. 234), and Body (fig. 235) (reduced). In the possession of the Rev. J. T. F. Halligey.

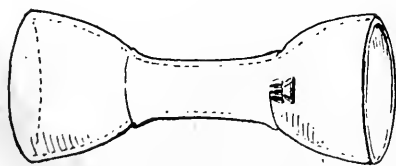


FIG. 235.

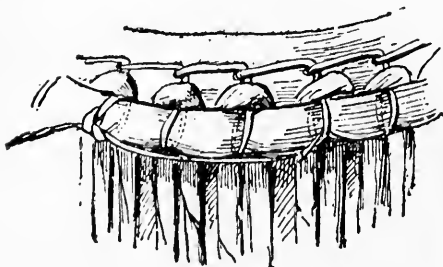


FIG. 236.—Portion of Yoruba pressure drum, showing method of attachment.



FIG. 237.—Bottom of carved coco-nut, fig. 229.



FIG. 238.

FIG. 239.

FIGS. 238, 239, and 240.—Carved coco-nut shell bearing carvings having reference to some court ceremony, specially carved for Mr. C. Punch. In the possession of Mrs. Tudor.





FIG. 241.—Carved coco-nut shell. In the possession of Mrs. Tudor.



FIG. 240.—Another view of carved coco-nut shell, fig. 238.



been introduced from other portions of Africa. Speaking generally, the art may be said to be characterised by boldness, freedom, clearness in execution, originality, due perhaps as much to a grotesque mixture of subjects as to the method in which they are handled, variety, a want of fantasy, and, excepting a few special cases, by primitive designs. It has not by a long way reached the stage attained for instance in New



FIG. 242.—Top of staff. From the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's collection.

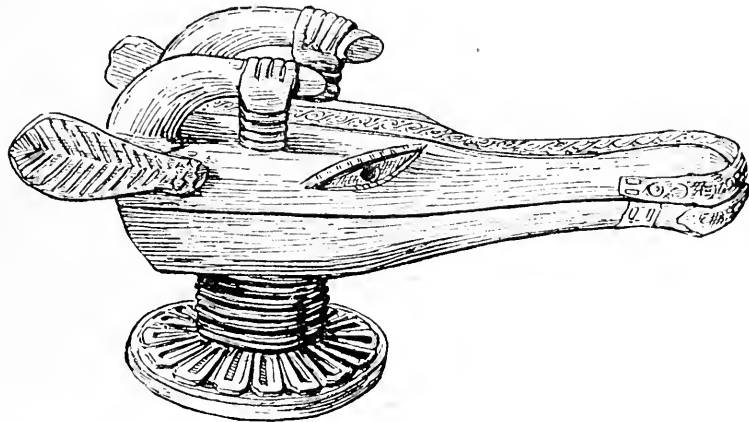


FIG. 243.—Casket From the late Miss M. H. Kingsley's collection



FIG. 244.

Guinea,<sup>1</sup> for it limits itself to the delineation of isolated portions of religious or court ceremonial, historical events, and individual peculiarities of human, animal, or artificial form, and hence it belongs to that early period so aptly described by Henry Balfour as "the age of realistic representation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Decorative Art of British New Guinea, by Prof. A. C. Haddon, F.R.S., Dublin, 4to, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> The Evolution of Decorative Art. London, 8vo, 1893, p. 7.

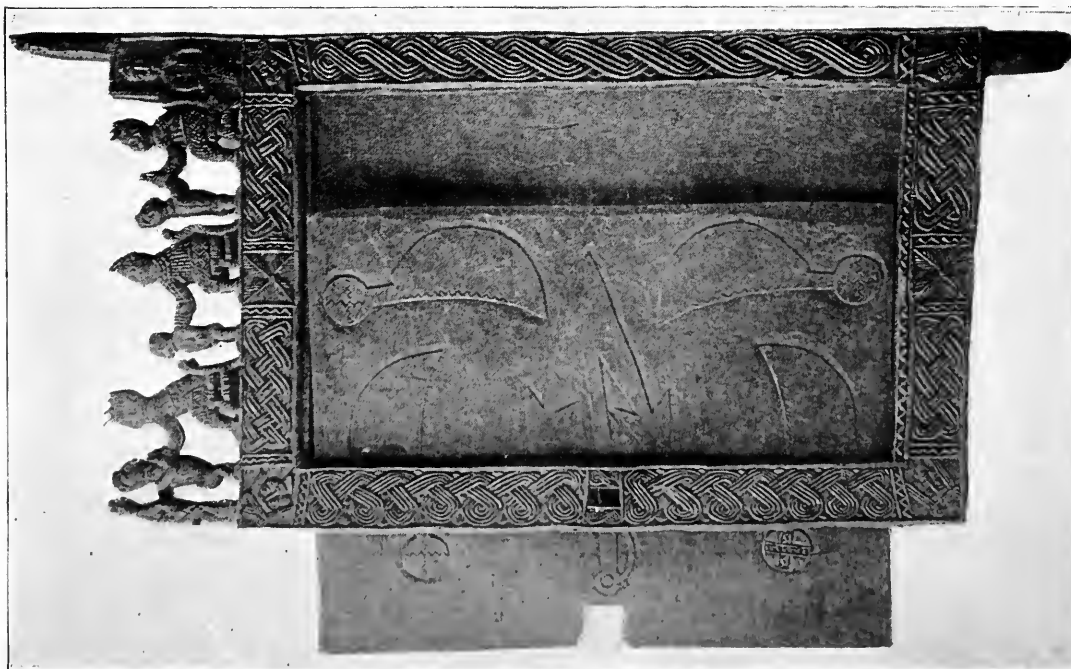


FIG. 245.—Looking-glass door-frame.

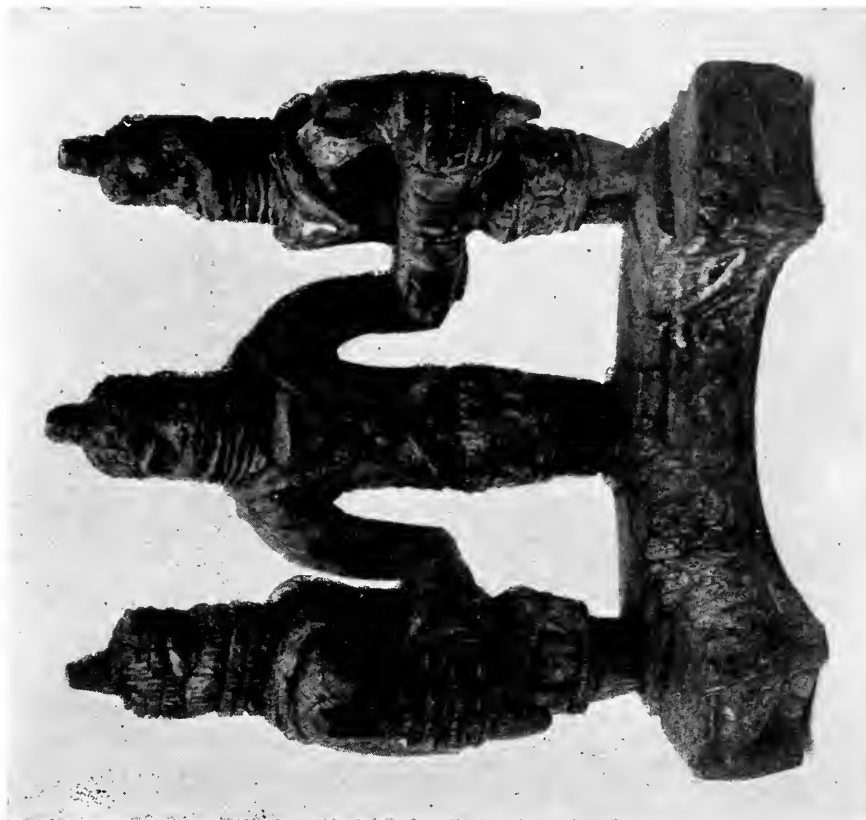


FIG. 246.—Curious ivory group, representing a big chief supported by lesser chiefs. Height  $4\frac{3}{8}$  in. (10.6 cm.) Liverpool Museum.



FIG. 247 —Carving on an elephant tusk.



FIG. 248.—Ivory bottle stopper.



FIG. 249.

FIG. 249.—Ivory armlet obtained from Lokoja at the confluence of Benue and Niger rivers, but judging by the arms emerging from the nostrils, of Benin make. British Museum. Diam.  $5\frac{1}{8}$  in. (13 cm.)



FIG. 250.



FIG. 251.



FIG. 252.

FIGS. 250, 251, 252.—Carvings on the armlet, fig. 249.



FIG. 253.—Bronze head of a young woman. The finest piece of cast bronze art obtained from Benin Height  $15\frac{3}{4}$  in. (40 cm.) British Museum.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE METAL CASTINGS

Metal castings an unknown Bini art—Earlier references—How the articles were found—Extraordinary variety—Bronze staff head (219)—A common motif—Conversion of the catfish—The rosette—Delineation of Europeans' limbs (220)—Representation of leopards' spots (221)—A bold piece of work—The sistrum—Flat bell forms—Female figures uncommon—D.R.'s rattle—Crotals—Method of casting crotals—An elegant piece of work—Brass casket (223)—A different style of work (225)—Bronze vase—A spirited piece of work—Bronze Ægis or Mask (225)—Accident to mould—Conversion of elephant's trunk—Method of producing the metal work (226)—*Cire perdue* process—Dr. Allman's find—C. Punch's views—Statement by Roupell's officials (229)—Local legend as to introduction of the art—Clever artificers raised to nobility—Suggested Portuguese origin (232)—Diminutive heads in backgrounds—Desire for increased artistic effect—First Portuguese figures on plaques (233)—The art of bronze casting possibly not indigenous—Style thoroughly African.

THE taking of Benin city opened up to us the knowledge of the existence of a hitherto unknown African craft, the productions of which will hold their own among some of the best specimens of antiquity or modern times. Truly enough, in the earlier accounts of Benin the bronze castings are mentioned, and as late as 1892, Capt. Gallwey (*Geogr. Jour.*, I., p. 130) speaks of them as brass ware of very clever workmanship; while Lander, when at Jenna, about forty miles north of Badagry, to the west of Benin, describes a curious brass instrument which, with our present knowledge, we may ascribe to Benin art: "North of Alorie" [Ilorin], he says, "on one of the musical instruments were represented the busts of two men, with a tortoise in the act of eating out of the mouth of one of them. The tortoise had a cock by its side, and two dogs standing as guardians of the whole. These figures were all ingeniously carved in solid brass . . . hundreds of little brass bells were suspended round their edges for ornament rather than for use, for being without clappers they could produce no sound." (*Jour.*, Lond., 1832, I., p. 101). Nevertheless, neither traveller, ethnologist, nor archæologist dreamt of the stores, rich in quantity and quality, as well as in variety, which have been brought to light.

The finding of the articles is thus described to me by my brother, Dr. Felix N. Roth, late District Medical Officer at Warri and Advance Surgeon to the main column of the Punitive Expedition:—"Every house had its alcove, of various dimensions, and with or without steps leading up into it; on the top or only step was found a variety of clay figures of men, women and children—like the natives—and whitewashed, with strings of cowrie shells, twisted cotton, etc., hanging round their necks. A large part of the loot was found embedded in the walls, and occasionally in so testing the walls the soldiery put their hands into human corpses built up in

Portions of this chapter appeared in *The Reliquary*, July, 1898, and *The Halifax Naturalist*, June, 1898.

them; some of the clay benches round the compounds also contained decaying human bodies. In front of the entrance to all the houses there were conical-shaped earthen mounds, which on being broken up were found to contain a few shells and beads. Some of the altars were also said to contain human bones. On one large plaque I noticed three European figures riding on donkeys (? small horses) and being pulled off by the natives; some of the apparent Europeans were lying about and had deep gashse



FIG. 254.—Bronze cock in the Leyden Museum.

in their bodies. In a group of bronze figures I saw dressed Europeans slaughtering natives, the latter being bound, with their hands clasped as in prayer and kneeling; heads of other natives were depicted lying about on the ground. In one compound by themselves I saw several good castings of bronze cocks (fig. 254), the feathers having apparently been afterwards chased to show the marks. There were also some very large heads (fig. 85), so heavy that one man could hardly lift them; there were also large copper snake heads, with open mouth, showing teeth well executed, equally heavy. While I was still in the city two solid cast brass figures were brought in. They represented dwarfs typical of cretinism (fig. 255); they were without hats, and



simply clothed in drapery from shoulders to below the knees; their weight was probably about 60 to 70 lbs. each. A curious brass jug (fig. 256), now in the British Museum, in form somewhat like the early English jug lately recovered from Ashantee, but with three protruding flat feet, I obtained out of the wall at the back of the king's compound."

It will not be out of place here to discuss the points of a few of the best specimens of the bronze and brass castings which I have been privileged to examine.

In fig. 257 we have the representation of the head of a staff, or wand of office, of which various specimens now exist in European collections. The motif may be



FIG. 255.—Bronze figures of dwarfs, from a snapshot photograph by Dr. Allman.

briefly said to be a leopard supporting a column on its back, a not uncommon motif in the art world, as, for instance, the lions and other animals supporting columns in Moorish and in Assyrian architecture; it is also not uncommon in the Yoruba country, where a drum on top of a column is occasionally supported by the back of an animal. The uppermost portion of this staff head consists of a band of engraved basket-work pattern, with grained open ground. This is followed by a band of fish-scale pattern, ornamented at the lower corners of contact by punched indents. On this band there are an upper and lower series of ornament in relief. The upper series consists

of four faces: that on the front being probably of a negro, with the tribal marks on the forehead, and that on the back being of a European, both faces being in full, and boldly and clearly executed, while the two faces on either side are of Europeans, flat, poorly executed, and in profile with the mouth curiously twisted into full face. The lower series consists of a central European full face (below the negro face), flanked by two conventionalised mud or cat-fishes, whilst at the back we have a rosette. It is an interesting study to trace in Bini art work the evolution of the mud or cat-fish (evidently a representation of a spirit of considerable importance) from the two distinct early conventionalised forms to the almost vanished animal represented by its whiskers alone in the later stages of ornamentation. In reply to my enquiry as to the probable species indicated by these representations, Dr. Günther writes me that the fishes are too much artistically distorted to allow of identification, but they give him the impression as if "the artist had in his mind the appearance of *Polypoterus bichir*, a common tropical African fish." The rosette also plays an important part as a decoration, of an almost high art function in this and other bronzes from Benin. We do not find it in rows or in borders, as architectural *patera*, so frequently to be seen in Egyptian or Assyrian sculpture, but dotted here and there as the fancy of the artist inclines, mostly at the two or four corners of the plaques (fig. 4). It has been suggested that this rosette is a representation of a palm, and there seems some probability for the suggestion, for the ribs are all more or less feathered to look like palm leaves. But in some examples the rosette appears to be intended to resemble a flower, and agrees herein with the Egyptian rosette (which we are told has a daisy for its prototype), thus possibly but hardly betraying an exotic origin.

The European figures on either side of the leopard, in their flatness and general crudeness are quite out of keeping with the rest of the work, and they contrast unfavourably with the bold life-like attitude of the animal. One is almost inclined to think that the same artist could not have modelled both the leopard and the two



FIG. 256.—Jug discovered embedded in the wall in a king's compound. British Museum.

distorted human figures. It is a character of nearly all the later human figures from Benin that the heads are out of proportion large to the size of the body, while the great length of the body is out of proportion to the size of the legs. The Bini almost invariably give their fellow Africans sturdy lower limbs, while they do not do so

invariably to Europeans (figs. 1 & 4). The latter, of a certain type, are made to stand on well-planted feet; while such Europeans as are in any way about to use their guns have the legs bent and puny. The idea is, I think, taken from observing Europeans lightly bending their knees when awaiting attack in a posture of defence, or from observing European sportsmen much in the same attitude when about to raise their arms to fire. In the United Service Museum there is an excellent bronze statuette (fig. 5) from Benin showing a Portuguese soldier with his legs in such a position.



FIG. 257.—Staff head  
(brass inlaid in copper).  
Length 9½ in. (24 cm.)

In depicting the leopard the artist has indicated its spots by means of a series of indents punched in a circle; but on other examples of leopards from Benin (fig. 258) the spots are indicated by flat rings in relief.<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, flat rings in relief are used by other Bini artists to represent the natives' woolly hair! (fig. 259).

One cannot help admiring the boldness with which this leopard has been modelled, or the firmness with which his claws grasp the ground; while the vigorous way in which the tail is made to support the back of the column should be remarked. Equally admirable are the suitable proportions into which the bands of ornament are divided. The uppermost band is kept well subdued, so that the faces of the next band are brought more prominently into relief; while the fish-scale pattern of the ground-work, on to which the faces have been grafted, affords scope for the artist to extend his design while still keeping the enchaîning well suppressed.

The next illustrations (figs. 260 & 261) represent two views of what we may venture to call a *sistrum*. It consists of what appears to be two brass bell bodies, a larger and a smaller, welded together at the tapering ends. African flat bell forms are well known, and frequently they are seen welded together as they are in the case illustrated (figs. 109, 110 & 262); the Bini sacrificial axe (fig. 61) offers a further example, and so do the sistra in carved ivory. On the face of the larger bell is represented the now well known group of a king or chief with a sort of Persian head-dress, with a harpoon-like projection, perhaps a degenerated *fleur de lys*,

at the top. He is supported on both sides by similarly dressed individuals. Somewhat above the level of his head the chief is flanked by two tablets, each upheld by a hand emerging from the background; such tablets are very common on the carved

<sup>1</sup> In the figure of Ptah-Seker-Ausar the body is ornamented by circles formed of dots, and the sarong by fish scale pattern very similar to that above described on the staff head (Walter Budge, *The Mummy*, London, 1894, p. 216).

tusks, but where they appear in bronze ware, they are upheld by a *female* figure, which is somewhat uncommon among the numerous figures represented in Bini art. All these figures are in relief. The background is enchased with an elegant foliated design, somewhat Bornean in character. The back of the bell has a similar relief, excepting that the supporters are kneeling and turned towards the chief, while the chief's legs are transformed into upturned semi-circles capped with the cat-fish head, the whole resting on a horse's full face. The ground work has the same foliated tracery as on the front. Below, in low relief, are two European profiles facing each

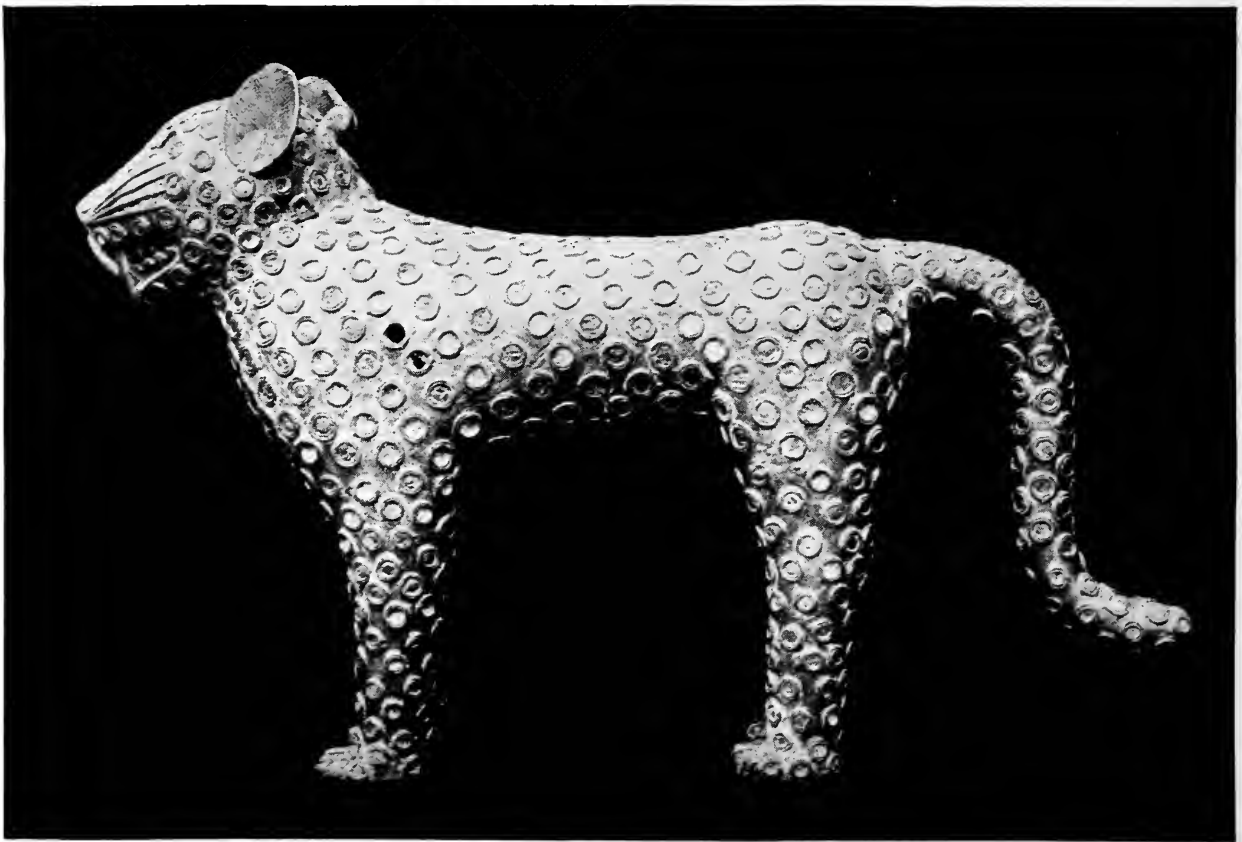


FIG. 258.—Bronze leopard with spots represented by flat rings Liverpool Museum.

other and holding a ring between them. The smaller bell is faced with a negro in high relief, shaking the rattle mentioned by D. R. (fig. 103). This man is dressed in one of the many costumes found on the Bini wall plaques already referred to; level with his shoulders on either side, in low relief, are what are probably meant, I believe, to be crocodiles' faces, while his legs are flanked by crude faces in low relief similar to those in fig. 257. The ground is filled in by the same enchased design as on the larger bell. At the two edges of this bell are a series of small crotals. These crotals are perfectly plain and hollow, and contain one or two small, more or less globular, pieces of brass or copper, about 4 or 5 mm. in diameter. When the instrument is shaken these produce a faint rattling, not a tinkling noise. In the collection in the British Museum, plaque No. 171 shows a man in high relief with such a sistrum in his hand. In the sistrum illustrated, the crotals have all been cast smooth,

but I have seen similar crotals, or hawk's bells, from other parts of the Niger Delta, where they have been made of spiral wire, and others again where they have been made apparently of rings of increasing size soldered together (see note fig. 126). In two places on the larger bell where the casting of the crotals<sup>1</sup> has failed, or where the crotals may have been broken off, other crotals have been let in afterwards as substitutes (but *not* as in some cases where extra ornamentation such as eyes, cat-fish, etc., have been made separately, then fixed on to the mould and caught up by the molten metal, and thereby giving at first sight the impression that the casting has all been made in one operation in one piece). Taken as a whole this sistrum is an elegant piece of workmanship. The thoroughness of the details of execution is worthy of a

Japanese, even the inaccessible and almost hidden portion of the smaller bell being enchased with a pattern (angular guilloche).

In fig. 263 we have represented a curious casket, brought home by Dr. F. N. Roth, and found suspended from a wall in a house in Benin. In design it is bold and artistic; the high relief of the bizarre face and the zig-zag conventionalized serpents and tadpoles being well thrown up by the enchasing of the ground-work. The proportions are all good, and this is especially the case with the enchasing of the inclined sides. If the actual workmanship be somewhat crude, that is to say, if the relief portions are roughly cast and not finished off, and the enchased work irregular, on the other hand the great variety of the objects exhibited without any overcrowd-



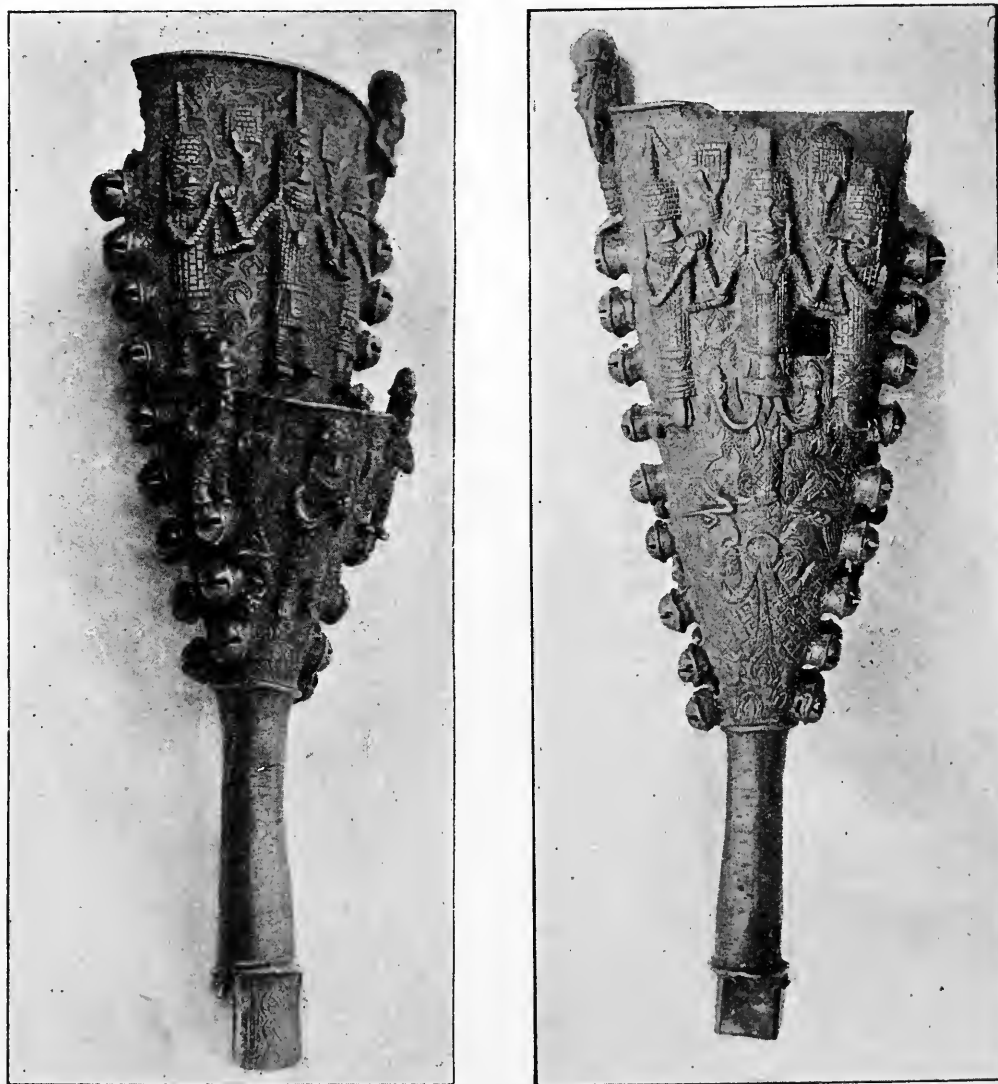
FIG. 259.—Bronze head of a horseman, with woolly hair represented by flat rings. In the possession of Mr. R. K. Granville. Height 3½ in. (8.9 cm.)

ing, the general grouping, the toned background, the real beauty of the major portion of the design, show that the artist was a man of considerable taste, not only judged as a negro, but as a man of culture. In fact but for the bizarre ornamentations in high relief, *i.e.*, the human face, snakes, etc., the whole design is so harmonious that it might be European, ancient Assyrian, or perhaps Phœnician in origin, for its design has much in common with the designs on brass plates or cups which have come down to us from those people. The heads in high relief on the inclined sides appear to be those of bullocks, pigs, and of some strange unknown animal. The top and bottom edges as well as the peripheries of the openings are ornamented with a double plait in low relief; below this decoration on the opening of the lower half of the casket, there is a series of eight small staples, from which probably a kind of small common hawk's bell was once suspended. The design on

<sup>1</sup> Crotals, or hawk's bells, form quite a feature of Bini art, and appear in the most unlooked for articles, either cast or suspended loose by links.

the inside of the lid is not so well enchased, perhaps on account of the difficulty of using the tool—nevertheless, it is pretty. A stout brass chain is attached to the casket by strong staples. The uses of the casket are not known.

In the three articles above described we have very good examples of some of the higher class metal workmanship as found in Benin. They are also representative, in so far as regards the execution, of the very homogeneous nature of the art metal



FIGS. 260 and 261.—Brass sistrum. Length 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (30 cm.)

work of that city. We will now deal with two bronze, or brass, castings, equally well executed, the examination of the workmanship of which, apart from any question of gradation of skill, tends, I think, to show that either there was a period when the workmanship and design underwent considerable modification, or that a different class of artist may have been introduced.

In fig. 267 we have a bronze vase whose ornamentation consists of four mask-like faces in high relief, two plain and two ribbed, set alternately; above each of the



ribbed masks there is a conventionalised decorated elephant's head without any trunk; above the plain masks there is a flat spiral on which rests an ornamental triangle on its apex. Between the heads are placed bands of very plain guilloche, each band consisting of alternate three or four rows each; above and below, concentric circles of imitation (? coral) bead-work, all in low relief, help to fill up the ground. The whole arrangement forms a combination of decidedly artistic effect. There is no enchasing or punching of any sort, nor is there much ornamentation, but that ornamentation is designed in such a spirited manner as to produce a result which can hardly be surpassed by Europeans at the present day.

The *ægis* (fig. 268) is of cast bronze, and consists of an almost semi-circular panel, surrounded by an imitation basket work border, all the designs being in high relief. There appears, however, to have been some accident to the mould, for the

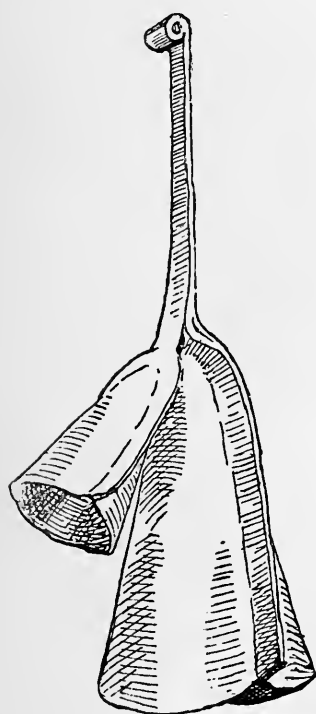


FIG. 262.—Double Bell Forms from Yoruba, In possession of the Rev. J. T. F. Halligey.

parts of this border do not meet and cross in the manner evidently intended they should do. On the outer edge of the border are eyelets from which (judging by other articles from the Niger Delta) little hawk's bells were at one time suspended. In the centre of the panel is a mask in several respects similar to one on the vase. An upward curling snake issues from each nostril, forming a design probably of considerable symbolic meaning, for we find it very common; where the head of the right hand snake should be, the casting has evidently failed, for there is a hole right through the panel. Above the mask are two almost circular holes, each bordered by the body of a snake with a head at both ends; these two holes give the impression of having been made to look through, so that the whole *ægis* may in itself have been worn as a mask. Above these eye holes is a bullock's head; behind and partly above this bullock's head is a broad loop running parallel with the plane of the *ægis*, by which it may be suspended. On either side of this head are elephants' heads with trappings falling over the forehead; the upper ends of the tusks appear to be bound round with cords; the trunks turn outwards, and their cartilaginous rings are brought prominently into relief, while their tips are roughly made into fingers holding a net

rattle, similar to the one described above. This human ending to the trunk is of very common recurrence in Bini objects, and is mostly met with in a very degenerate form on the carved ivory tusks, where the hand at the end of such trunks is made to hold a feather, panel, or other object; in the course of the trunk's degeneration into an arm by itself, the tusks cross and join, and with the ears help to form an ornamentation, which looks like an epaulette (fig. 269). At the bottom of the panel in the middle there is a small grotesque looking object, which may be meant for a frog. I have met with this object both well and indifferently executed on other forms from Benin. Below the central mask are two cat-fish, with their tails curving to right and left towards the trunks, which in the smoothness of body, in shape of tail and head whiskers, differ very materially from the cat-fish, whether conventionalised or not, as depicted in fig. 270.

It is very clear that the style of the art of the vase and *ægis* differs materially from that of the staff and sistrum. There is no enchasing or tooling whatever; there is not even an engraved quarterfoil, a design almost universal on the plaques, and so clearly shown on the illustration of the morion (fig. 271).

It may now be asked how were these articles produced, and whence did the people learn the art? They were made by the *cire perdue* process (Fortnum, *Bronzes*, p. 19), that is to say on a core of hardened sand is moulded a wax model, which is then carefully coated with clay; the wax is melted out, and the molten metal is made to take its place; when cooled and the clay removed the rough casting is the result. This is then generally finished by tooling, punching, etc. The articles are not always



FIG. 263.—Brass Casket, diam.  $8\frac{1}{8}$  in. (20.6 cm.) Formerly in the possession of the late Mary H. Kingsley, now in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

cast in one piece, and wherever possible skill is shown in order to save metal or to ensure lightness, by making protuberances concave at the back. In the staff head described above, the hard sandy core can still be scraped out, so that we have here a decided proof as to the process employed. The ancient Etruscans and Greeks made their castings solid, without any sand core, while the Bini were evidently adepts in the superior method practiced by the ancient Egyptians. (Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Anc. Egypt*, London, 1883, II., 202).

According to Dr. Allman "The manufacture of bronzes was evidently carried on under the direct supervision of the kings, as the smelting pots and the clay and bees-wax for moulding, etc., were all arranged in a compound adjacent to the palace. Several moulds in various stages of completion were found here; those ready for casting represented when broken the following appearance. A mould of special clay

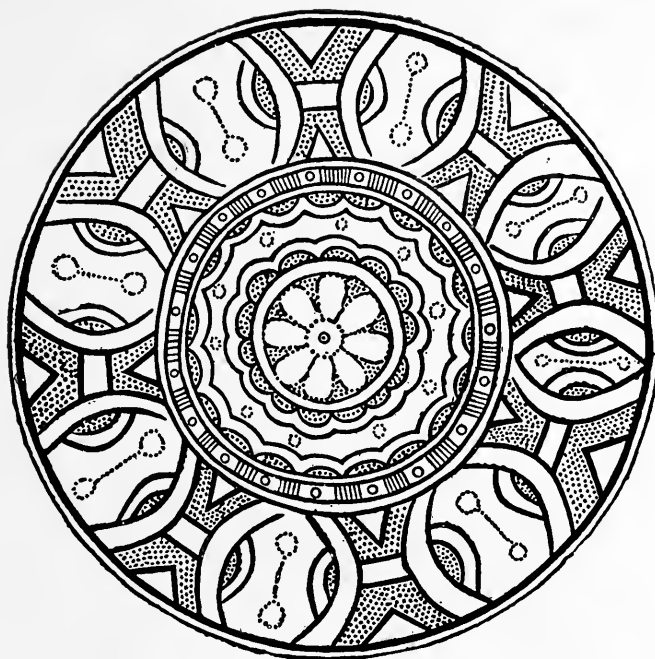


FIG. 265.—Bottom of Casket (fig. 263).

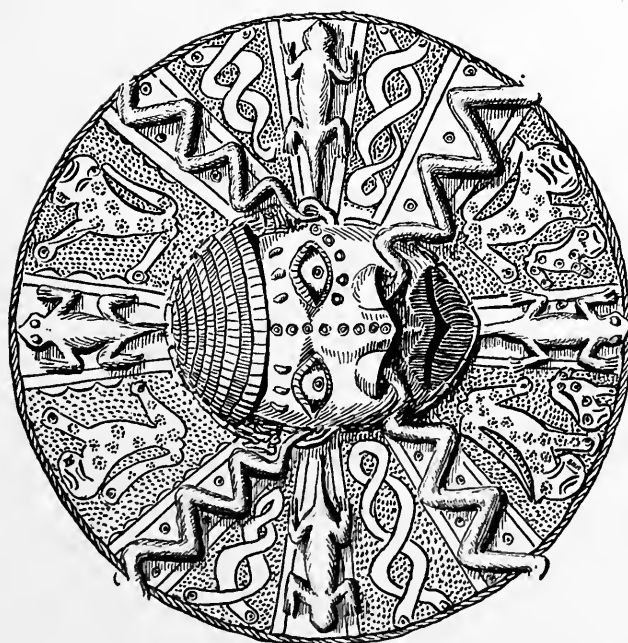


FIG. 264.—Top of Casket (fig. 263).

formed the base, over this a likeness of what was required was beautifully modelled in beeswax, and outside this a covering of 'potters clay,' the whole being wrapped in ordinary mud of mortar. I can only conjecture the final process to complete the operation, i.e., the mould, after being sufficiently sun-dried, is transferred to the

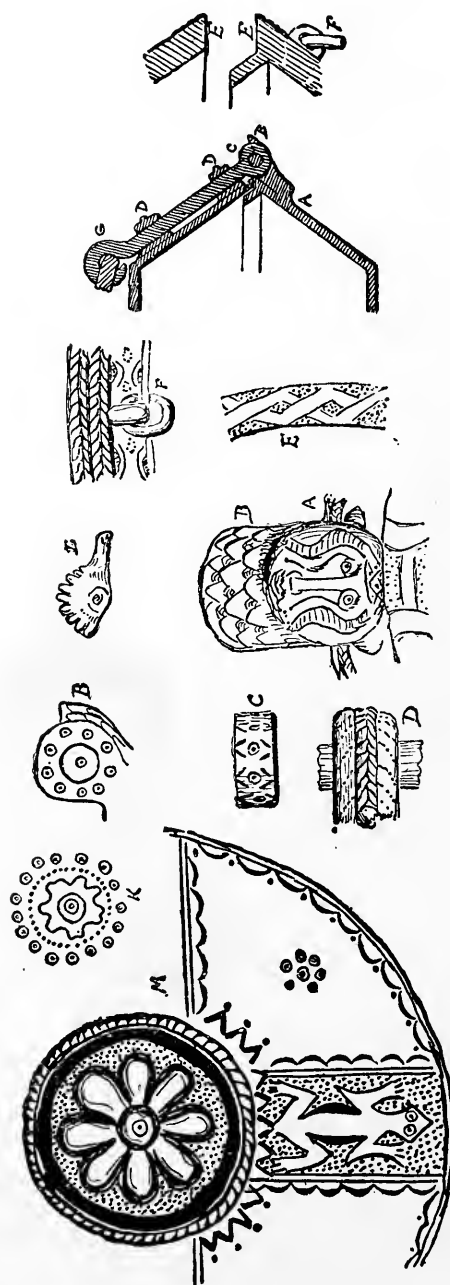


FIG. 266.—A, B, C, hinge of Casket (fig. 263) in various aspects to show how the least available space has been used for ornamentation; the face A is on the under side of the hinge B. C, one of the rims of the hinge. D, rivet holding the chain in position. E, ornamentation on rim of opening of casket. F, pendant ring from which bell probably used to hang. L, curious ornament. K, design in centre of lid inside. M, part of design in centre of bottom inside.

smelting pot and completely submerged in the molten metal, which takes the place of the wax, and the object is accomplished." On the other hand, Mr. Punch does "not think the bronze castings were done under the direct supervision of the king, as the latter's personal staff consisted of his bodyguard, his executioners, his handy-craftsmen, but did not include bronze workers for the bronze castings which were

done elsewhere. I do not think any of the large castings were done in our days, but am not certain. They claim that they were still made, and I saw some fairly large quadrangular bells with the medallions and fine fish-scale pattern which were fresh. However, all the heads that I saw were of old make, I saw none with marks of fresh firing." Roupell's officials did not include a bronze worker, but they gave him the following account of the origin of the process: "When the white men came in the time when Esige was king, a man named Ahammangiwa came with them; he made brass work and plaques for the king; he stayed a very long time, he had many wives



FIG. 267.—Bronze Vase. Height  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. (14 cm.)

but no children; the king gave him plenty of boys to teach; we can make brasswork now but not as he made it, because he and all his boys are dead. Before King Esige died he sent one man named Inoyen to the white man's country with some white men; he stayed long, and when he returned he brought back with him that plain stool and a message of salutation from the king of the white men. When Erisoyne was king he had one made like it so that men might see it and say, 'Look, Erisoyne

made this.' When Osogboa was king, he sent messengers to the King of Igbon Ibo, (? a country near the Niger), but the people of Igbon were bad and killed the messengers, then Osogboa vex, and he sent war against Igbon and caught the king and plenty of his people. When they brought them Osogboa called Ahammangiwa and his boys, and asked them if they could put them in brass; they said 'we can try,' so they did and those are they—then the king nailed them on the wall of his house. The other plaques are pictures of white men, friends of the kings and Ahammangiwa, but who they are or their names we do not know. The remaining plaques we do not know who they are. The white men's house is near Obayagbon's, it is where the

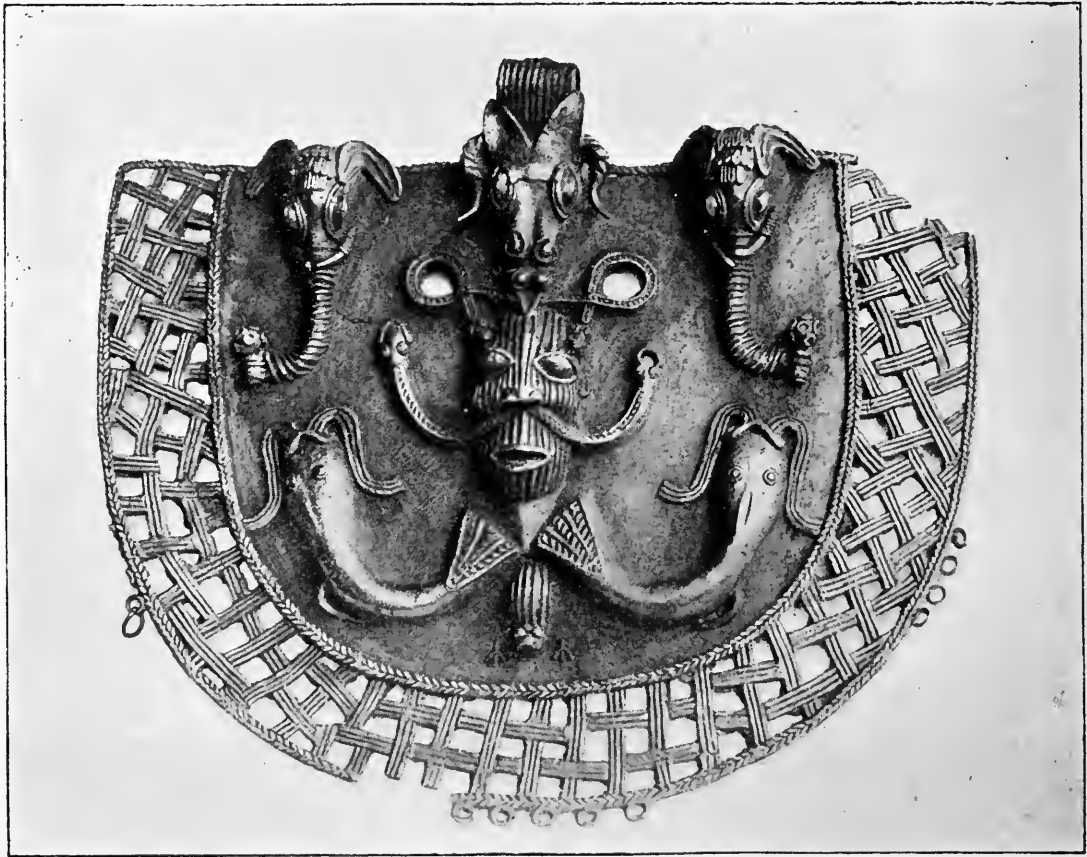


FIG. 268.—Bronze *Ægis*.  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ . (40 × 35 c.m.) Liverpool Museum.

first king put them—it has always been kept up ever since—it has fallen in now since the war. Ahammangiwa was a white man. In the time of Esemede, Overami's, the late king's grandfather, white men named Ayniaju, the man without eyebrows, and another named Cappy Dor, used to live and trade at Gwatto. Chief Eseri was alive then. Cappy Dor was a big stout man."

Landolphe (II., p. 49) when speaking of the iron and copper used to decorate the interior of the houses, says that all artisans who distinguish themselves in their craft receive a patent of nobility.



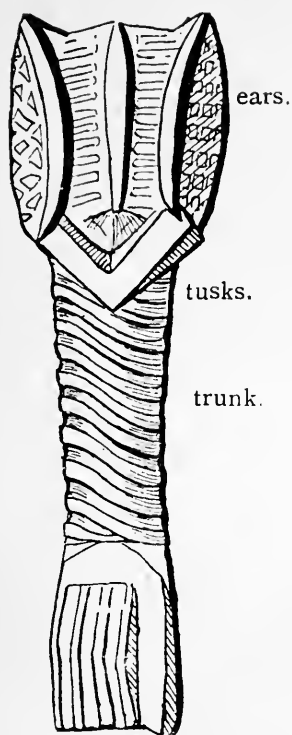


FIG. 269.—Degenerate Elephant's Head and Trunk, carved on Elephant's Tusk.



FIG. 270.—Cat-fish on plaque.



FIG. 271.—Bronze Morion, showing foils (three to six leaved) Diam. 266 mm., Height 213 mm. Formerly in the possession of the late Miss M. H. Kingsley, now in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

As there is probably hardly a traveller from Africa who has not recorded the art of iron smelting among the Negro or Bantu tribes, we may accept it as a fact that the art of smelting iron is a very old one in Africa. Bowditch (*Mission to Ashanti*, pp. 311-312) describes a method of gold casting on the Volta river, where a wood core was in use instead of a sand one. Quite lately Robinson (*Hausaland*, p. 118) states that at Kano, "there are also on sale swords, spears, and many other articles made of native wrought iron. The article desired is first formed in wax, and from this a clay mould is made into which the molten iron can be poured." There is here, however, some complementary information wanting, for what is the object of going to the trouble of modelling and moulding if the article is to be



FIG. 272.—Group of bronze female figures. Leyden Museum.

beaten (wrought) afterwards? Between the crude castings of the average native African and the fine results before us there is a vast difference, and hence the common expression of opinion that the art as we see it to have existed in Benin was an imported one, an opinion apparently confirmed by the numerous Portuguese or other European figures now discovered in Benin. On the other hand, we are still quite in the dark as to any existence of such high-class art in the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century; and we know there was not much of this art in the rest of Europe.

In the splendid series of plaques from Benin in the British Museum we find many plaques with diminutive Portuguese heads or figures in low relief in the back-ground

(fig. 2). We may take it, I think, for granted that these additions in low relief are, like the rosettes (fig. 4) above referred to, after-thoughts put on to meet the desire for increased artistic effect; that they are, in fact, put there for decorative purposes in the course of the development of the art.



FIG. 273.—Group of bronze figures, including four females with gourds rattle. (See fig. 103).

Hence, as the additions are always Portuguese heads (or figures), and not Bini heads (or figures), we may, I venture to think, conclude that some of the plaques of native subjects without these additions were made before those of Portuguese subjects; in other words, that the art was there before the Portuguese arrived in the country, and was just emerging from that of realistic representations and beginning to indicate some attempt in the direction of decoration.

We have in the bronze plaque, fig. 1, an illustration of a European, with a matchlock, in the costume of the middle of the sixteenth century, and Messrs. Read and Dalton very

justly call attention to this, on account of the correct delineation of the dress of the period. It is therefore the middle of the sixteenth century that we can fix upon as the earliest date at which it was probable the Bini people had commenced to make plaques with *European* figures, but *not* the date at which they commenced to make any plaques at all. Benin was discovered by Sequeira, about 1472. By the middle of the sixteenth century (*i.e.*, 1550) we have an almost perfectly accurate figure of a European, presumably made by a native. It is not conceivable that an introduced art could have developed at so rapid a rate that within seventy years (probably less, for the art would not have been introduced the first day) such a high pitch of excellence could have been attained by the natives? As an alternative, I can only repeat, as above suggested, that the art existed in Benin prior to the advent of the Portuguese, but that, as was the case with many other things with which the Portuguese came in contact, these remarkable explorers left their mark strongly impressed on this art work, and thus it may be that the natives began that series of borrowed forms which is so puzzling to us. But in an attempt to ascertain the origin of the Benin bronze art, we cannot pass over unnoticed the facts that several of their institutions show indications of exotic origin, and that the ornamentation is full of foreign forms. We find the law of inheritance different from that of the peoples of the surrounding country, probably as a result of the gross superstition which centred everything in the fetishism of the king. We find vestiges of the old Catholic ritual in more than one instance. We find that the internal division of the buildings are exotic arrangements. We find designs in wood-carving (fig. 245) which were common forms among the Hittites, and we have bronze and brass castings which bear undoubted traces of the influence of Europe of the middle ages. One of the patterns of a ring (fig. 22) is Graeco-Roman, another (fig. 21) we meet with in Tunis, a third (fig. 27) is like Saxon work, and on one of the bells (fig. 78) we find a double-spiral ornamentation of the old Swiss lake dwellers. The manilla (fig. 147) is almost Celtic in shape; the squeezed-up lizard (fig. 113) might be Scandinavian. The mixture of the designs in fact almost equals that of the population of ancient Babylonia.

One department of Bini art was of a high order and certainly a long way in advance of anything their neighbours could produce. On the other hand, their pottery was exceptionally crude, and their superstitions were of the lowest, although not primitive type, and quite on a level with those of Dahomey. Why there should be these contrasts in an obscure corner of Africa it is difficult to explain; and we may well ask what could have made their bronze castings unique, for there is absolutely nothing like them in any other part of the world. With the advent of the Portuguese their quasi-civilization appears to have received a considerable impetus, then as European trade decayed, the people gradually fell back; with the Dutch advent there was probably a second revival, only to collapse again as before. The Europeans did not love one another, as we read in the records, and in the carved work of the natives. Whether they did or not, or whether the country was poor or rich, the Europeans did not stay long at a time. This may have been due to the unhealthiness of the climate; but the probabilities are that the country never was good for traders, for had there been reasonable expectations of making money, Europeans would have persevered in spite of climate and native opposition. But it was not Europeans only who paid fitful visits. Capt. Landolphe records the arrival in Benin while he was there, in 1786, of an embassy from the interior of Africa, the members of which stated they at home founded cannons, and made all sorts of small arms. He thought they might possibly be Moors expelled from Spain, and although he talks of them as negroes, he adds "their hair was not frizzled like that of the people inhabiting the West Coast of Africa." (II., pp. 86-8). While we have of course no direct clue as to who these people were, they may have been merchants from the Haussa States, and this visit tends to confirm the opinion that in former days Benin was a state of considerable commercial importance. The trade relations of the Sonray empire, (which according to Barth,<sup>1</sup> dates from A.D. 300) through the city of Tademaket<sup>2</sup> (which had traded with Egypt), were great, and direct commerce might have been established by such people as are mentioned by Landolphe, with the Mediterranean across the desert. Commerce and the intercourse it breeds is no doubt responsible for the large variety of forms in the art of the Bini, but it is hardly sufficient to account for the exceptional bronze plaques. It seems as though the only conclusion we can arrive at is that we have in them a form of real native art. This opinion is strengthened by the fact that we can trace to some extent in them progress and decadence; and in the general carving and ornamentations we can see very clearly the process of the evolution of new forms out of the primitive realistic representation. At the present day, the method of casting the bronze and brass is in use by the Haussas, and possibly might not be indigenous, but the style is distinctly African, with numerous inroads of that of other peoples, and especially is such the case after the advent of the Portuguese.

<sup>1</sup> Reisen u. Entdeckungen, Gotha 1858, iv., pp. 417, 618.

<sup>2</sup> On the Niger, nine days from Gogo, destroyed in 1460.

# APPENDICES

## I

### THE TREATY MADE WITH THE KING OF BENIN

#### ARTICLE I.

HER Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, in compliance with the request of the King of Benin, hereby undertakes to extend to him, and to the territory under his authority and jurisdiction, her gracious favour and protection.

#### ARTICLE II.

The King of Benin agrees and promises to refrain from entering into any correspondence, Agreement, or Treaty with any foreign nation or Power, except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Britannic Majesty's Government.

#### ARTICLE III.

It is agreed that full and exclusive jurisdiction, civil and criminal, over British subjects and their property in the territory of Benin, is reserved to Her Britannic Majesty, to be exercised by such consular or other officers as Her Majesty shall appoint for that purpose.

The same jurisdiction is likewise reserved to Her Majesty in the said territory of Benin over foreign subjects enjoying British protection, who shall be deemed to be included in the expression "British subject" throughout this Treaty.

#### ARTICLE IV.

All disputes between the King of Benin and other Kings and Chiefs, or between him and British or foreign traders, or between the aforesaid King and neighbouring tribes, which cannot be settled amicably between the two parties, shall be submitted to the British consular or other officers appointed by Her Britannic Majesty to exercise jurisdiction in the Benin territories for arbitration and decision, or for arrangement.

#### ARTICLE V.

The King of Benin hereby engages to assist the British consular or other officers in the execution of such duties as may be assigned to them; and, further, to act upon their advice in matters relating to the administration of justice, the development of the resources of the country, the interest of commerce, or in any other matter in relation to peace, order, and good government, and the general progress of civilization.

#### ARTICLE VI.

The subjects and citizens of all countries may freely carry on trade in every part of the territories of the King, party hereto, and may have houses and factories therein.

#### ARTICLE VII.

All ministers of the Christian religion shall be permitted to reside and exercise their calling within the territories of the aforesaid King, who hereby guarantees to them full protection.

All forms of religious worship and religious ordinances may be exercised within the territories of the aforesaid King, and no hindrance shall be offered thereto.

#### ARTICLE VIII.

If any vessels should be wrecked within the Benin territories, the King will give them all the assistance in his power, will secure them from plunder, and also recover and deliver to the owners or agents all the property which can be saved.

If there are no such owners or agents on the spot, then the said property shall be delivered to the British consular or other officer.

The King further engages to do all in his power to protect the persons and property of the officers, crew, and others on board such wrecked vessel.

All claims for salvage dues in such cases shall, if disputed, be referred to the British consular or other officer for arbitration and decision.

#### ARTICLE IX.

This Treaty shall come into operation, so far as may be practicable, from the date of its signature.

Done in triplicate at Benin city, this 26th day of March, 1892.

(Signed) OVURAMI, his X mark, King.

H. L. GALLWEY, Deputy Commissioner and Vice-Consul, Benin District, Oil Rivers Protectorate.

Witnesses.

(Signed) H. HALY HUTTON.

ALLAN H. HANLY.

JOHN H. SWAINSON.

I hereby certify that I have interpreted the full purport of this Treaty to the King, and that he clearly understands the nature of the contents and the meaning thereof.

(Signed) AJAIE, his X mark, Interpreter.

## II

### A DIARY OF A SURGEON WITH THE BENIN PUNITIVE EXPEDITION<sup>1</sup>

By FELIX N. ROTH, M.R.C.S., and L.R.C.P.

COLONEL BRUCE HAMILTON, Major Landon, Captains Carter, Ringer, and Searle, and Gregory, of H.M.S. '*Theseus*,' myself, with 260 Protectorate troops one Maxim, two seven-pounders, and carriers, arrived at Ceri from the first landing-place, Warregi, at 4 p.m. on February 6th, 1897. We are up here before the naval men, in order to cut a path for them and clear ground for their camp, and look after its sanitary arrangements. As soon as we arrived we encamped in the native village; pickets were out for the night, and just at the present moment the officer is going his rounds, the bugle having sounded the last post. It is a strange life, black troops lying about all over the place, laughing and gibbering like a lot of monkeys. A dull, cloudy night, and plenty of mosquitoes to keep us all awake, gives a man time to think what the future will bring, when once we have started into the Benin Country.

Ceri, February 7th.—I slept last night on the ground in a native hut, it being too late to rig up a bed or couch. This morning I looked after the sanitary arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society.



ments of the camp for the naval column—that means we have to make everything comfortable for the naval brigade, which is expected on the 10th or 11th of February. We are called the advance guard, and have plenty of work. We cut roads, build trenches, get up stores from Warrige; in fact, we have to do all the nursing, as it were, so that the naval men may not be exposed in the severe climate, and may have as little as possible to do. Searle and Carter are looking after the troops to-day, Landon and Ringer are busy with the carriers, arranging stores, and Gregory, of H.M.S. '*Theseus*,' is taking positions.

Ceri, February 8th.—We are still at this place, getting things—houses, etc.—ready for the naval column. We did a lot of work to-day. I found a spring, and have dammed it up, so that a large number of men can draw water from it. To-night Major Gallwey, our Consul, and Executive Commander Bacon, have got a canoe and boys, and are reconnoitring up the Ologbo creek, to find out if there is any branch connecting with Benin City. We think there must be a branch, as we cannot understand how else the Benin City people can obtain their drinking water. It is rather a risky undertaking for the two men, but they are both cautious, and will, no doubt, bring back a lot of useful information. They cannot go during the day, as when we tried a little while back, one of our officers was fired upon. In so far as I can find out we shall cut a road from Ceri to a position opposite Ologbo Town, which is a few miles distant from here. We shall then shell Ologbo itself, land some black troops, and build a suspension bridge, which has been prepared by the naval men. The span is about 70 or 80 yards; we are not sure of the length, but shall know in a day or two. We shall then most probably form a big base there, land the naval brigade and stores, etc., and make a start to cut the bush path which leads to Benin. The following is to be the order of procedure:—Captain Turner, of the Protectorate, will scout with about 60 Bonny men, the same who did the scouting for the Ashanti Expedition in 1873. These men will work through the bush to find out where the natives may be lurking; they will be supported by our black troops, but how many I do not know. Then come the bush cutters and more black troops, with two doctors, one being myself. We shall do this till we get close to Benin, when a naval column will come up and help to take the city. This is to take place within seven or eight days. There may be a little fighting, but such care will be taken that I think few men will be killed. Ubini is the native name for Benin City. So far all the white men are fit; I trust few will go down with fever.

Ceri, February 9th.—It is really quite a sight to see the black troops quartered in this native town of Ceri; there are 250 of them. One is tumbling over them all day, or rather all night, as during the day they are hard at work in the camp which we are making for the white troops here. The officers' mess is also quite a sight; we are thirteen, all told. Searle, who is working like a nigger all day building huts in the camp, is also looking after all the provisions for the mess, and I am mess president, looking after the food, of course, and bossing the black boys and cook, and seeing that the water is boiled before distribution. I seem to be busy all day, and when night comes I feel that very little has been done. Last night we sounded the assembly, so as to get the men to their posts, just as if we were having a night attack from the natives. The men turned out well; they were all dressed and in their accoutrements and at their posts in about two and a half minutes, which is considered very good. After inspecting them, to see that they had come to their proper places, we dismissed them to their quarters. The gunners under Searle were prepared for action in the short space of two and a quarter minutes, all fully equipped. It seems strange to sit under a thatched roof on four posts, and eat one's food in the open, and then after dinner to clear away and write letters. As I sit here at the present moment a big ant walks calmly over my paper, or some other insect drops from the roof down my neck; as of course we all wear shirts unbuttoned at the neck, we give the insects, etc., every chance. Then, again, the chattering of the native troops is rather astonishing, one would think we were really amongst a lot of women; unfortunately we are not, God bless them all the same. Many amongst us

will wish for their tender care to nurse us as we go down with the fever, or by the enemy's shot.

Ceri, February 10th.—I have had a talk with Locke and Boisragon. It seems to me some of the members of the Mission might have been saved, but the order not to carry arms prevented them making any effectual resistance. Yet there must have been some sort of treachery, as the King of Benin, to a certain extent, was willing they should come up and see him. Besides, the Bini did not attack them at once, as they wished to find out if the expedition were armed or not, and also have time to make an ambuscade. All the white men who were massacred behaved well. Dr. Elliott again and again rushed in among the natives, who were several deep, and who were armed with long flint-locks, and although he was fired at, he struck right and left at them with only a stick. Poor Maling, too, did his best, and like Crawford, while dying, told the others to run for their lives and leave him. A pity such fine men should fall in such a treacherous manner. "Little Chumpy" has a seven-year-old nigger servant, who has been taught, whenever he brings a drink to anybody, to say the following :—"God bless the Queen, and I hope you will knock hell out of the King of Benin." He says this while saluting, with a most serious face. The Admiral Sir Harry Rawson and Staff, with our Consul-General, came up to-day to look about the place; it was astonishing how he managed to walk the distance from Warriga to Ceri, it was so very hot. He will be carried back, and quite right, too, as he is rather a heavy man. Captain Egerton, who is at the head of the staff, decided, in consultation with the others, to build a bridge across the Ologbo creek, about half a mile higher up the creek than this village of Ceri. It will be a swinging one, made of steel wires, and attached at either end to trees on each side of the creek, which we find is about 120 feet across, something like the old chain pier at Brighton, the footpath being swung in the same manner. The gear for the same will be brought down the river to-night, and to-morrow the engineers start work in earnest. While this is going on a party of black troops, over one hundred strong, with a seven-pounder and a Maxim, will reconnoitre inland for about a thousand yards. We shall have scouts in advance, and I am to accompany them as medical officer; I hope the natives will not spot any of us. We know of, and also notice, natives in hiding opposite Ceri. We are also to be supported by an armed launch and surf boats full of men well armed with Maxims and rifles. I heard to-day we are most probably to make a start for Benin on the 11th, but I think it must be later. Before I proceed I must mention that a column called the Sapoba Column is to go to Sapoba, and is to consist of men from H.M.S.'s *Phæbe*, *Alecto*, and *Wigeon*. Another column, the Gwatto, is to consist of men from H.M.S.'s *Philomel*, *Barossa*, and perhaps *Magpie*. This last column is to destroy all the Bini towns on the eastern bank of the Gwatto creek as far as Ikuro. Both columns are to be assisted by canoes, and are to patrol the river with their boats, and prevent fugitives from passing. Seven more men joined our mess to-night at a moment's notice. Their chairs were ammunition boxes—one dish, the *pièce-de-résistance*, was a washing basin containing an Irish hash. Being short of knives and forks, one man was obliged to have a mouthful, and then pass the table cutlery to the next man.

Ceri, February 11th.—The boat scouting party, which started this morning, consisting of a hundred men under Colonel Hamilton, went up the river about a mile and a half, and landed on the other side, where a few huts were seen. From there a short trip was made into the bush, but the ground being very swampy, it was obliged to return after traversing only a few hundred yards. Another party, under Searle, with the same number of men, a Maxim and seven-pounders, acted as reserve on this side of the river. It is now found to be impossible to throw a bridge over the creek, and to-morrow a party is to make a start from Ologbo towards Benin. All the Protectorate troops, under Erskine and Turner, will cross the Ologbo creek. The scouts to proceed first, to see that we are not ambuscaded. Colonel Hamilton will be in command, and I am to go as medical officer. We have been busy all day preparing loads for the carriers. I am in charge of the mess and the mess gear, and, as the fellows

are a hungry lot, it can be easily imagined what a work I shall have to do to feed them. Up till now they have been very good, and have hardly grumbled or sworn at me at all. Captain Boisragon is invalided, and leaves for home at once; we do not think he is fit for active service, as he is still suffering from a shock due to his very severe experiences during that awful massacre of a month ago. The weather is very hot and very dry for this country; it has not rained since we arrived here a month ago. I have asked Consul-General Moor, in case I am knocked over, to sell all my effects; we expect some heavy bush fighting to-morrow. A marine from H.M.S. *Theseus* died yesterday from heat apoplexy, but this is nothing, as many more will go down similarly. At present the men are in splendid condition. I have just heard that there has been a brush with the natives at Gwatto, four blue-jackets and an officer wounded. I am too busy to write more news, but I hope to do so to-morrow. We had a little surprise to night, as some shots were fired into camp, and the fellows got startled.

Ologbo, February 12th.—We started from Ceri yesterday, at about six p.m., in the launch *Primrose* and in surf boats, with 250 black troops, two Maxims, one seven-pounder, and half a company of blue-jackets, with one Maxim and a rocket tube. As I got my orders about half an hour before we started, I was unprepared. Luckily, I always have my waterbottle filled at night, but I had no rations. As I passed the admiral's quarters I noticed a nice block of naval chocolate lying neatly in some paper outside his door. I stole that chocolate. We went up the Ologbo creek for about three miles, until we reached Ologbo. We shelled the village, and cleared it of the natives. As the launch and surf boats grounded we jumped into the water, which reached to our waists, at once placed our Maxims and guns in position, firing so as to clear the bush where the natives might be hiding. We rushed on some hundred yards, again put our guns in position, and, in conjunction with volley firing, again cleared the bush. We expect the second division to come up to our support in about two hours' time, as we sent the launch and surf boats back to fetch them. While holding the place the natives crept up to us several times, howling at the top of their voices, and firing into us. They attacked us first in the front, and then on each flank. Luckily we kept them at bay with volley firing and our Maxims, and only Captain Koe, of the N.C.P. Force, was severely wounded in the wrist. But luckily several other officers and men were hit by spent bullets only. After that we had drinks, and enjoyed the Admiral's chocolate. Soon afterwards more men came up, and we took our troops into the bush and cleared the natives out as well as possible. This path to Benin City is only two or three feet broad, allowing sometimes two men to walk abreast, but as a rule the men are obliged to walk in single file. The natives showed some cuteness, for on one side of the road they had cut a track for some hundreds of yards, so as to be able to fire on us as we went up. Luckily for ourselves, we found this ambushade at once, thanks to our scouts, and troops were sent up it. We went straight on for about three-quarters of a mile, with Maxims working in front and on the flanks; at the same time volley firing was kept up by the troops, so as to clear the bush on each side of us. We arrived at a small village, which we cleared with Maxims and rockets, and then rushed it, the natives clearing out right and left. We then put out pickets all round the place, and under their cover troops and carriers cut down the bush, so as to clear the place and allow us to see in case we were attacked by the natives. We camped here for the night, putting out double sentries everywhere. We shall remain here till we get up our supplies, consisting of ammunition, rations for officers and men, and particularly water, which has always to be boiled. The usual routine of bush fighting is to use the Maxims in the front, and to keep up volley firing on the flanks by the troops. The men then rush ahead and again clear the bush, and so on. This first division is under Colonel Hamilton, a most charming man, very quiet, and "all there," very energetic and cool, too; the climate does not seem to affect him much, although it has been very hot and very damp. The bush looks lovely; there are any amount of big trees about the place, and the green is of a rich colour, but it seems quite a mis-

take that there should be such a lot of hostile blacks about these quiet places. The village is, as usual, very straggling; still it gives us good shelter at night. We have been lucky so far; there has been no rain, and we all hope there will not be any before we get to Benin City. At Ologbo, Captain Campbell, of H.M.S. *Theseus*, in charge of second division, is making a camp, arranging everything, getting our supplies over from Ceri, boiling the drinking water, building a hospital, and making sanitary arrangements and all ready that may be necessary for a good camp.

February 13th.—We had rather a busy and exciting day yesterday. About sixty black scouts, under Turner of our force and Erskine of the Navy, came up to-day to scout in advance of us to find out the movements of the natives. The Admiral had been rather seedy after his walk in the sun from Warriga to Ceri; he got overheated; but he told me he was better yesterday, and I think he will be all right to-day. Our bridge could not be made, as we should have to walk three miles through the swamp opposite Ologbo. I had a chat with Moor, our Consul-General; he told me the following: On February 10th Gwatto was attacked and occupied by naval men; one officer and two men of H.M.S. *Widgeon* severely wounded, one officer and one man of H.M.S. *Philomel* slightly wounded. On February 11th Sapoba and roads at back were occupied by naval men. Whilst stockading camp there Pritchard and one man of H.M.S. *Alecto* were killed. So our column so far has fared the best; but it won't last long, and we shall have to fight our way up to Benin City. Some more men have gone down with sunstroke, but I have not seen or heard of any cases of malarial fever yet. Smallpox has broken out among some of the Sierra Leone carriers; but it is of a mild sort of form, and somehow it has never been known to have been communicated by the blacks to the white men. We make another start late to-day or to-morrow; we have seen no natives since yesterday, but some have crept up and fired into us. We believe they are concentrating their forces at the next village, or somewhere on the road to Benin City, for their final stand. Of course they may ambuscade themselves and try to stop us, but we shall succeed in the long run, however many men we may lose. We are now in the Bini Country, and the houses in the villages are thatched in a different way from the other villages we have passed so far. They are covered with leaves only, tied up in bunches, and not with big palm leaves. Then again, the walls are made with split wood, and not of mud, as in the other places. We shall have great difficulty in getting water up here, and it is uncomfortable to be without it. We are dirty and dust-begrimed; unshaven, and sticky; our clothes are wet, and at night all the horrid animals of the bush crawl over us and sting us.

Cross-Road Camp, February 15th.—We left the Ologbo Camp yesterday morning at 6 a.m., but a little before 3 a.m. we had a night alarm, the natives came round part of the camp, beat the tom-toms for our edification, and kept us awake and on the alert, ready for our start. Allman, the principal medical officer, and myself, of the N.C. Protectorate, dressed and got pottering round, getting our carriers in order, and collecting stretchers and hammocks for the wounded. Well, we started at day-break, Colonel Hamilton in command, with 260 black troops, one rocket tube, two Maxims, one navy Maxim, two seven-pounders, a company of marines, and forty scouts. We proceeded up the Benin road for about three miles, when the natives, who were in ambush, fired upon us again and again. We cleared them out with Maxims and volley firing several times, but they again came on and fired into us. We again cleared them out of the bush with the Maxims and forced them to retire, and after our column had done another mile or so, we formed camp for the night. Our firing was pretty hot, the rattling of the Maxims and rifles, the shouting of the officers, the howling of the enemy, and the excitement amongst our own carriers are beyond me to describe. The excitement in the dense bush, the smoke, the working of the seven-pounders, and the whizzing past of our rockets put the fear of God both into ourselves and the natives. I picked up one man shot through the thigh, and another through the lungs. Luckily no white men were wounded; we all got off scot-free. We marched in single file, the scouts in front, followed

by a half company of black troops under white officers, then followed a Maxim, with one in reserve; myself, with stretcher party, were close behind them. We seem to be doing all the fighting up at this end of the column. I cannot tell the order of the middle and rear part of the column, which is nearly three miles long, being much too busy at my end. We had now cleared the natives out of their camp, and the troops, in conjunction with my stretcher party, started to build a hospital. This consists of four upright posts, fixed into the ground, and lashed together at the top with cross-pieces, all tightly fixed together by a native creeper called "tie-tie." The roof consists of the hammocks laid on the cross-pieces. Being at the head of the column, where all the fighting takes place, most of the wounded come under my hands first. Every time a man is wounded the whole column stops, the path being so narrow we can only march in single file. It is impossible for me to do much for the wounded. If a man is bleeding badly I simply put on a tourniquet or dressing, and leave him on the side path, to be picked up by Allman and his stretcher party, who are at the rear of the column. By the time I have built my hospital Allman comes up with the wounded and the field cases, and we at once start to do our best for them. Everybody has complimented us on our arrangements, and the quick way we erect our hospitals. We make the poor wounded chaps as comfortable as possible, and despatch them at once to our base at Ologbo. We sent a batch down to-day at 3 p.m. I must mention that our black troops with the scouts in front and a few Maxims do all the fighting. I am the medical officer with them in the thick of everything. My black boy Charles carries my bag, which contains a few bandages and tourniquets, and I have also with me four hammocks and four stretchers. In fact, I am the first aid to the wounded. Allman follows up with a field case and another stretcher party. We extracted the bullet from the wounded man's thigh, but could do nothing for the man who was shot in the lungs. These black men heal wonderfully well, and take everything as a matter of course. At about 3 p.m. part of the column started to burn a village, but after nearly losing ourselves in the bush and struggling through the same for seven miles, we were obliged to return before dark, accomplishing nothing. Our camp is a great clearing made by the natives; the trees are nearly 120 feet high, with much foliage at the top, the sun hardly being able to penetrate down to us, which is lucky, as the place is thus kept cool.

Obaraté, February 16th.—We have to-day had a real lively and hot day, fighting our way through the bush. We left the camp at the Cross Roads at 11-15 a.m., as the first division entered it. After advancing for about two hours at the rate of one mile an hour, the enemy commenced firing at us along the whole line, which was in single file, and nearly a mile long. At two places the natives broke into us, but we soon cleared them off. At the head of the column, where I was, the firing was very heavy. Luckily no white man was hit, but I do not know what may happen later on, as we get nearer to Benin, where we are certain to meet with much greater opposition. One black soldier was shot in the head and killed, one native scout was shot right through the neck below the jaw, and one little carrier was shot in the cheek. These men were dressed and brought along with us, and ultimately sent back with an escort to the base. But I am digressing; time after time the natives came on us, but our Maxims and volley firing cleared the bush, and we advanced steadily till we came to a clearing. It was a native camp, which the natives had just left, and part of the advance guard, going on, occupied the village of Obaraté. It was soon taken, hardly any firing being necessary, as the natives had cleared out, and the rest of the advance guard coming on, we encamped there for the night. We were all very tired and slept well, although we first cut down the bush, and put sentries all round the place. The natives have never been known to attack at night; this holds good all the world over, still we always take precautions. We have been short of water, and are sending some hundreds of carriers out to get some, and if it comes back in time we shall proceed to take the next village on the road to Benin. We can only get about two quarts of water daily per white man, so there is no washing to be done, and we keep away from each other as far as possible, and as we have



no change of clothes, or very little, and as the weather is very hot, one can imagine the beautiful state we are in. From the last camp to this village is only about four miles, but fighting and stoppages kept us on the road from 11-15 a.m. to nearly 4 p.m. The village we are in is rather pretty. There is an avenue of cocoanut palms about 40 feet apart, the road running between them; outside this again are the native huts, extending two and three deep, the avenue being about a third of a mile long. We have had no orders about starting yet. One of the officers went away with some troops to look for water, and just now we hear firing, so I suppose the natives have been coming on again. I shall be glad when I am well out of this. We all think it is a settled affair that we shall get medals and clasps. I had to stop just now at about 1 p.m., as the natives kept crawling up and potting at us, Colonel Hamilton ordering us to get under cover; I take advantage of it and write a few more notes. We have been busy all day; the Admiral and Consul are coming up from the Cross-Road Camp. I hear we are to start to-morrow, the 17th, with the advance column, part of the first division, and some of the staff, so it will be a long one, extending over several miles, the men being in single file. The intention is to do the next seven miles to Benin as quickly as possible in two days, but it is hard to say whether we shall succeed, as we do not know the position of Benin City, and all the information we can get is from a dumb man and from a slave boy, who has only been there once. I think we are in a fairly safe condition now. We have just heard that a number of dead natives were found near Ologbo, who were shot down by our volley firing and Maxims, when we landed there for the first time some days ago. This morning I was sent out with a hundred men and officers and two stretchers with the scouts to reconnoitre about a mile off. We got to a clearing and rested. Suddenly the natives started potting at us. We returned the fire, but one of our scouts was shot through the head and killed ten yards from the path. The Admiral is not in very good health. In chatting with him he informed me he was all right bodily, but that he could not sleep at night, as he had so much on his mind with respect to the expedition. Moor looks very fit, perhaps a bit anxious, but otherwise very cheery, and always chaffing me. O'Farrell went down with fever as soon as he arrived at Ologbo, so he was sent back to the base. I am up with the advance column and at its head, continually under fire, so shall not be astonished if I come back with a bullet or two inside me. Considering the bush we have to get through, we have been very lucky so far. We have lost no white men yet, as they did on the Sapoba and Gwatto routes. But there the naval men had no black troops with them, and rather exposed themselves to the native fire. We know this sort of work, and are much more careful. Up till now we have only lost two and about four wounded, and one white officer wounded in the wrist. This is considered good; in fact, it is not one per cent. We get no water for washing, and hardly any to drink; what an awful-looking lot we shall look in a day or two! I hear when we take Benin City the N.C.P. forces will hold the place, while the naval men will at once return to their ships, and if they get home at once will divide all the honours with the few Special Service officers who have been sent out here to help us, whilst we, poor devils, will be out here for another twelve months and get no *kudos* when we get home, although we are doing, and will be doing, all the heavy work! But such is life! I must hurry up as it is getting dark now. No news or despatches will be sent off till we take Benin City. We are completely cut off from our base for the next two or three days, as the case may be. The Cross-Road Camp has been well fortified, and should we be badly attacked, that place will be our only hope. It is wonderful how thirsty all the men are here. There has been no rain; marching in the sun is dry work, and all the native wells we have passed are empty.

Awako Village, February 17th.—We left Obaraté this morning with the Admiral and staff and Consul-General. Colonel Hamilton led the advance. Our scouts and black troops, under English officers belonging to the N.C.P. Force, with a Maxim or two, cleared the bush with volley firing at the head of the column, as usual. Admiral Rawson, Moor, and staff are in the middle of the column, which is about three miles



long. The carriers, who number about a thousand, carrying principally water, ammunition and food, are well sprinkled with marines and bluejackets. The column consists roughly of 250 N.C.P. troops, 120 marines, 100 bluejackets, 30 scouts, 5 Maxims, 2 seven-pounders, 2 rocket-tubes, and about 6 medical men with stretchers, hammocks, and field cases. I was, as usual, at the head of the column, and continuously under fire. We left at 6-15 a.m. At 7 p.m. we came in contact with the enemy, a running fight being kept up till 10 a.m., when Agage village was taken. We had dislodged the enemy from two of their camps *en route*. We rested here one and a half hours, and made another start at 11-30 a.m. Again a running fight was kept up, on and off, till 3 p.m., the Maxims and volley firing clearing the bush, when we reached the village of Awako, which the enemy had deserted shortly before our arrival. *En route* we dislodged the natives from their camp, which they had formed near the road. It is hard to imagine what our nerves are like after firing away and being fired at for so many hours on a blazing hot day, and in dense bush, where the path is only broad enough for the men to walk in single file, and so dense that one cannot see more than a few yards on each side of one's self, and where we never get a glimpse of those who are potting at us. Anyhow we are all getting accustomed to it, and hope not to get potted, as we are so close to the city. We have cleared the bush around Awako, our usual routine, and camp here to-night. One man was shot to-day, and while making our camp to-night another was shot in the stomach and one in the face, but not seriously. We reckon we are about six miles from Benin City, and ought to take it to-morrow. The mind of the native is very obtuse so far as distances are concerned, and that is the distance we are told it to be, but, of course, it may be farther away than we expect.

Benin City, February 19th.—We are now settled down in the above place. It is a misnomer to call it a city; it is a charnel-house. All about the houses and streets are dead natives, some crucified and sacrificed on trees, others on stage erections, some on the ground, some in pits, and amongst the latter we found several half-dead ones. I suppose there is not another place on the face of the globe so near civilisation where such butcheries are carried on with impunity. But to continue my narrative from the time I left off. On February the 18th we left Awako, with the whole force, our black troops leading. We marched from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. without stopping, being fired on continually in the dense bush, which we returned with volleys from rifles and Maxims. At 1 p.m. we came to a clearing in the path, and about a mile ahead was the city. We put some rockets and seven-pounder shells into the place, and then started off again. Again and again we were fired into, and then suddenly diverged from the dense bush into the main thoroughfare leading into Benin, which is about 60 yards broad here. The firing was very hot. Then the enemy collected on the opposite side of the road in the bush and trees, and kept up a hot fire, killing and wounding a lot of our men. They had made a sort of embankment which, owing to the dense bush, could not be seen; they fired over this and then dropped down, so that until some of our troops passed this place and the natives were afraid of being cut off, they peppered us fearfully. I was in the middle of it, and feeling most uncomfortable, dressing the men's wounds, and stopping their bleeding to the best of my ability. I did not like it at all, as I then noticed, by the ping of the bullets, that the natives must be using repeating rifles, the firing being so heavy and quickly delivered. I have never seen anything like it before; the grass was in patches only about two feet high, and I was obliged to crawl with my black boy Charles from one wounded to another. Luckily the very severely wounded had been carried under cover by their comrades, and although I found several slightly wounded, with a little persuasion I managed to get them to crawl under cover by themselves, my stretcher party having disappeared, with the hammocks and stretchers, as soon as the firing commenced. Poor Captain Byrne and his company of 60 men were the ones that suffered most, the former being severely wounded in the spine, and sixteen of the latter killed and wounded. There was no naval doctor with these men, and as I was just in front, and seeing how they got bowled over, I was obliged

to fall back and do my best for them. Ultimately I got under cover myself. While attending to the wounded I was informed that several more were lying out in the road, and as nobody volunteered to bring them in, I told my black boy Charles to do so. I could not go myself, as I was too busy tying up wounds, so Charles went out and brought in a wounded carrier. Shortly afterwards he again went out, followed by Lieutenant Beamish, and brought in a wounded marine. It was lucky neither of them was hit, as the natives tried to pot them from the ambush. All of us agreed that Charles behaved splendidly; he was very cool, and did not seem to mind the bullets at all, although they were hitting the ground and throwing up the sand around him. While under cover I noticed three of the men in a dying condition; others were shrieking, cursing, and damning the natives. One man implored me to let him have his revolver back, that he might shoot himself, the agony he suffered being so great. As I was leaning over him, trying to relieve his pain, unseen by me he pulled my loaded revolver out of its case, but I was just in time to knock it out of his hand. Afterwards he tried to get hold of a marine's rifle. The poor chap must have been suffering agonies, while all around him the wounded and dying were shrieking for water, blaspheming the natives, and crying for help; others, again, were helping one another, tying up their wounds, and trying to staunch the bleeding. It was a curious sight to see the unwounded, with their arms round the necks of the wounded, talking to them in tender, womanish words. Every now and again I could hear one man saying to another softly—"All right, don't give way, I'll look after you—I won't let the natives get at you—I'll kill and revenge those brutes," etc., etc. All these expressions, intermingled with oaths, but in a nice way, trying to soothe the wounded. I wish I could express here what I saw the men must have felt for one another. The whole thing was most heartrending. In the meantime the main column had rushed up the big thoroughfare, but what happened I cannot tell you, as I stayed behind with the wounded. Shortly afterwards the rear of the main column came up to us, and the poor, wounded men felt somehow safe again. By this time the head of the column had rushed the king's compound. After dispersing the natives with Maxims and volley firing, Benin City was ours. When the expedition started the authorities had only a slight idea of the position of Benin City. The fetish, too, being very strong in the Bini country, it was impossible for us to get any guides, and we had to rely for the path which led to Benin on two human beings—one being a dumb man and the other a small slave boy, as already mentioned. Between these two there was generally a discussion as to which was the direct and shortest road to the city. We always took our chance, and relied mostly on the man, and luckily hit off the right road the whole way.

As we neared Benin City we passed several human sacrifices, live women-slaves gagged and pegged on their backs to the ground, the abdominal wall being cut in the form of a cross, and the uninjured gut hanging out. These poor women were allowed to die like this in the sun. Men-slaves, with their hands tied at the back, and feet lashed together, also gagged, were lying about. As our white troops passed these horrors one can well imagine the effect on them—many were roused to fury, and many of the younger ones felt sick and ill at ease. As we neared the city, sacrificed human beings were lying in the path and bush—even in the king's compound the sight and stench of them was awful. Dead and mutilated bodies seemed to be everywhere—by God! may I never see such sights again! Just before we came upon these horrors an old man appeared from behind a big tree which had fallen across the bush path we were following. He was using bow and arrows, and believed (as we were told afterwards) that he was invulnerable. He was, however, shot. In the king's compound, on a raised platform or altar, running the whole breadth of each, beautiful idols were found. All of them were caked over with human blood, and by giving them a slight tap, crusts of blood would, as it were, fly off. Lying about were big bronze heads, dozens in a row, with holes at the top, in which immense carved ivory tusks were fixed. One can form no idea of the impression it made on us. The whole place reeked of blood. Fresh blood was dripping

off the figures and altars (months afterwards, when we broke up these long altars, we found that they contained human bones). Most of the men are in good health, but these awful sights rather shattered their nerves. We sent a despatch with ten men to our camp at the Cross Roads; whether it will reach or not we do not know, for we are cut off from everywhere at present. We are 300 white men, and will pull through somehow, you bet. We put out strong sentries, and slept the night amongst this filth in the open. I must mention that both black troops (who led all the way, by the by) and all the white men behaved splendidly. All of you at home can be proud of them. Fancy the state of our nerves, for eight hours walking through dense bush, where one cannot see more than ten feet away what is happening on the flanks, and to be potted at again and again by hidden natives, and to see men hit and fall close to one. Of course our great enemy was the want of water, and this was a great trial to the men, in the hot and blazing sun. This morning half our column, with 300 carriers, scouted about for water, which we rather expected to find three miles off. Luckily we found it. There are many bullocks and goats about the place, so for the next few days we shall have plenty of rations. It is quite possible, while getting our water, we may be attacked, as the path which leads down to it enters a very narrow gorge. But, being well armed, I think we shall be all right. I must not forget to mention that when leaving Awako yesterday morning the natives attacked the rear part of our column, the casualties being (for the eight hours till we took the city) four white men killed, one being Surgeon Fyfe, R.N., and sixteen white men wounded, Captain Byrne being one of them, three N.C.P. black men and three carriers killed, one court messenger and one guide wounded. This was rather a heavy loss for such a small force. We have been getting the place into ship-shape to-day, February 19th, and trying our best to make it defensible. We are also collecting food and water, and sending down an escort to the Cross-Road Camp for all we may require. I hope our men will get through. We are all right for ammunition, and can hold the place, if we get enough water, till the second division comes up. A party have gone out this afternoon to find and see the king's place; they went down the main thoroughfare, and have just returned. The whole road is strewn with dead, crucified and beheaded bodies in all states of decomposition, most of them blown out to double their size by the strong rays of the sun. Ajuma's house (a big chief), near here, was burnt, the natives only firing a few shots at us. The ju-ju houses were also destroyed. We buried our dead to-day. Captain Byrne is better, but there seems very little hope for him. Three hundred yards past the king's compound the broad road which passes through Benin City is covered with bodies, skulls, bones, etc., most of the bodies being headless. The king's house is rather a marvel—the doors are lined with embossed brass, representing figures, etc., etc., while the roof is formed of sheets of muntz metal, and the rafters to support the same artistically carved.

February 20th.—In front of the king's compound is an immense wall, fully twenty feet high, two to four feet thick, formed of sun-dried red clay. This wall must be a few hundred yards long, and at each end are two big ju-ju trees. In front stakes have been driven into the ground, and cross-pieces of wood lashed to them. On this frame-work live human beings are tied, to die of thirst or heat, and ultimately to be dried up by the sun and eaten by the carrion birds, till the bones get disarticulated and fall to the ground. There were two bodies on the first tree and one on the other. At the base of them the whole ground was strewn with human bones and decomposing bodies, with their heads off. Three looked like white men, but it was impossible for me to decide, as they had been there for some time; the flesh was off their hands and feet, and the heads had been cut off and removed. The bush, too, was filled with dead bodies, the hands being tied to the ankles, so as to keep them in a sitting posture. It was a gruesome sight to see these headless bodies sitting about, the smell being awful. All along the road, too, more decapitated bodies were found, blown out by the heat of the sun; the sight was sickening. To-day was occupied in blowing down these ju-ju trees. Passing through

the centre door of the big wall we came upon a large tree; at its foot was a deep pit, which we noticed contained dead bodies. The natives, after sacrificing their victims, threw their bodies down there. On the first afternoon of our arrival our black troops heard faint cries coming from some of these pits, and letting themselves down came upon some live captives lying amongst the dead ones, in a very emaciated condition. They had been down there many days without food and water, intermingled with dead and rotting bodies. Some of these poor fellows had been carriers with Phillips' party, in the ill-fated expedition some weeks before. I found from them that all the white men in that expedition had been killed on the Gwatto road, and none had been brought into Benin City to be sacrificed, as the British public were once led to believe. One of the saddest sights, as we entered the big palaver house, was to notice the effects of the massacred white men. Amongst them we noticed Phillip's helmet in its case, a doctor's bag complete (which belonged to poor Elliot), while, scattered here and there, were their clothes, hats, boots, cameras, and other things so useful to men on the march. Of course we found no arms or ammunition, the natives having most probably used them against us.

February 21st.—A great disaster took place to-day, which really will prove a blessing. About 3 p.m. a good breeze sprang up, and while this was blowing, two carriers carelessly set fire to a hut. Unfortunately the wind was blowing towards the part of the town where we were quartered, and although the fire was about a mile away, Allman and myself advised everybody to remove their effects from the native huts, but, not thinking the fire serious, the officers only removed the ammunition to a safe place. The wind blew stronger, and the fire increased frightfully, the flames passing from house to house, and even setting light to the trees. As soon as we noticed it, we removed our medical stores; the men tried to move their stores, but were too late, and most of them had everything burnt. Even the things which had been placed in the middle of the big compounds caught fire, the heat being very great. In less than an hour the conflagration had burnt itself out, and the whole place was strewn with ashes. The next day we found what a blessing had come to us, for fire, smoke, and charcoal seemed to have removed all the smell, and the city became sweet and pure again.

February 22nd.—At 8 a.m. the Admiral and staff left Benin City, with all their troops and wounded. They go down to Ologbo in easy stages, so as to give the latter every chance. Our black troops and officers lined the road through which the Admiral passed, and gave him three hearty cheers as he left with his men. Tomorrow the N.C.P. forces start their heavy work again. The king has to be followed and caught, the country opened, and the natives so influenced as to gain their submission. I cannot help closing this article without a word of praise for my black Accra boy, Charles Nartey. He is about eighteen years old. Throughout the expedition he behaved splendidly under fire. Although he was simply my own boy, Consul-General Sir Ralph Moor ordered me to put his name down for a medal and clasp, for behaving so well, and bringing in two wounded men under a heavy fire.

### III

## THE SURRENDER AND TRIAL OF THE KING

It will be remembered that when the Punitive Expedition against the King of Benin, for the massacre of Phillips' party, took the city on the 17th of February, 1897, all the inhabitants with their king and ju-ju men fled into the bush. A portion of the houses surrounding the king's compound was blown up and destroyed, to enable the invaders to defend their positions should the Bini return to the fight,

while two days afterwards, there occurred the great conflagration which destroyed the city. Parties were sent out in search of the king, but the unknown country, and the impenetrable character of the bush, enabled him to elude his pursuers, although the latter frequently got on his track, and had sharp skirmishes with his "boys." The following account of the trial and deposition of the king, when he finally decided to give himself up, is taken *verbatim* from letters written home at the time by my brother, then in the service of the Niger Coast Protectorate.

On the 5th August, 1897, having become sick of his unaccustomed roaming bush life, King Overami came into Benin city with a large following, amounting to about 700 or 800 people, all unarmed, headed by messengers with a white flag in front. He was supported in the usual way by chosen men holding him up by each arm. Some twenty of his wives, who accompanied him, were of a very different class from those seen previously. They had fine figures, with their hair worn in the European chignon style of some years ago, really wonderfully done in stuffed rows of hair, the head not being shaved on top like that of the lower classes, and they wore coral necklaces and ornaments and hairpins galore. About ten chiefs came with him, including Aro a big chief, arriving by the Sapoba road, not by the water road as was expected. For obvious reasons, all the white men kept out of sight on his arrival. He was preceded by a native band using a sort of reed instrument, and took up his abode at the house of Chief Abeseke [Obaseke], a member of the new Native Council established by the Resident. The king's party had a great "pow-pow" that night, and kept it up very late. The next day, on the 6th, the king rested after his fatigue, and on the 7th, at 11 a.m., he came down to the Palaver (Court) House<sup>1</sup> with about 400 of his own "boys" (men), all of whom were stark naked, as was their custom in the presence of the king. He was also accompanied by about twenty chiefs, including Tosheri, the big war chief, besides Eschudi [Ushude], Aro, and Ojumo [Ojomo]. The acting Resident (Captain E. P. S. Roupell) was seated at a table at the mouth of a small tent; with him were Captain C. H. P. Carter (Royal Scotch), commanding the troops at Benin city; Lieut. Gabbett (Royal Welsh Fusiliers), and Dr. Howe. The king, who is a stout but fine man of considerable intelligence, about forty years of age, was in a very nervous state. The escort of the Resident comprised only eight Houssas, as it was considered advisable not to bring more, for fear of frightening the king and his party. The remainder of the Houssa troops were, therefore, kept under arms inside the stockade, ready in case of emergency to turn out at a moment's notice. The king was simply covered with masses of strings of coral, interspersed with larger pieces, supposed to be worth many pounds. His head dress, which was in the shape of a Leghorn straw hat, was composed wholly of coral of excellent quality, meshed closely together, and must have weighed very heavily on his head, for it was constantly being temporarily removed by an attendant. His wrists up to his elbows were closely covered with coral bangles, so were his ankles. He only wore the usual white cloth of a chief, and underneath, a pair of embroidered and brocaded trousers; he had nothing in the way of a coat, but his breast was completely hidden from view by the coral beads encircling his neck. There was a crowd of some 900 to 1000 people standing round when the Resident called upon Overami, the king, to make his submission. The king was visibly agitated, and after much consultation with the chiefs, the chief Aro asked that the king might do so in private, as he did not like to abase himself before such a crowd. This request was naturally refused by the Resident, and then, sup-

<sup>1</sup> "The term palaver, derived from the Spanish *palabra*, talk, has a very extensive meaning. It signifies dispute, controversy, argument, reasonings. War palaver, trade palaver are used in reference to these affairs. God palaver is applied to the missionary teaching; and sweet mouf [mouth] palaver is analogous in its meaning to the term 'blarney' with us." (Hutchinson: Impressions. Lond., 1858, p. 119).

"Of the chiefs mentioned in this trial the following were nobles; Ojomo, Yaceri, Ollubusheri, Obaseki, Obadesagbo, Obanyagmo, Obahawaia, Ushudi, Idohun, Obamoi, Obajuhomua, Aro, Aribi, and Ewagwe." C. P.



ported by two chiefs who assisted him, the king made obeisance three times in the usual manner, rubbing his forehead on the ground three times. After this, the other



FIG 274.—Method of paying homage, or making submission, from a snap shot photograph by Dr. Allman.

ten chiefs, who had not previously made obeisance, performed the same homage. The Resident then explained to the king the present political position of the Benin country, and informed him that he was deposed. That closed the palaver, the king retiring with his body-guard of 400 stalwart men to Abeseke's house. Except to get the submission of the king and chiefs, nothing else could be done then, the Resident awaiting the return of the Consul-General, who was expected to arrive at Benin city in from two to three weeks' time, when the big palaver would take place, and when the king and certain chiefs supposed to be guilty would be put on trial for the massacre of Phillips' party. Since the war, the king, it was said, had not sacrificed a single human being.

The big palaver or trial for the massacre of the white men began in the Consular Court House, Benin city, on Wednesday, 1st September, 1897, at 4 p.m.

The court house was guarded inside and outside by the Hausa soldiers; a large crowd of natives came down with the king, but was not allowed to come within 50 or 60 yards of the court. There were present Sir R. D. R. Moor, K.C.M.G., Commissioner and Consul-General; Captain E. P. S. Roupell, Acting Political Resident; Captain C. H. P. Carter, Officer Commanding Troops Benin City; King Overami, nine members of the newly established Native Council, and some 60 Chiefs of Benin City.

There were no advocates on either side, and every witness was cautioned to speak the truth. The Consul-General opened the proceedings by stating that the palaver was not about the late fighting, because it was quite right that the natives should fight for their country, but that it was about the massacre of the unarmed white men of Phillips' peaceful expedition. The palaver would be managed native fashion, that is, according to native custom and law, and not according to white man's law. The first thing to settle was to find out who instigated the massacre, whether the king or the chiefs?

The three witnesses on behalf of the British were Igbedio, 'a boy' (*i.e.*, dependant) of the chief Obahawaie, Agamoye, a boy of the chief Obassieki, and Wobari, another boy of Obahawaie. They all acknowledged that they knew beforehand that all the white men were unarmed, and that they with many others were sent by the chiefs to kill the white men, Jekries, and Kru boys; which they did, and cut off the white men's heads and sent them to Egoru. One member of the ill-fated expedition who was not killed outright, was taken to Benin and thence to Egoru, where the boys of the chief Ochudi killed him. Before the massacre a chief named Idahie passed them, with the white man's stick,<sup>1</sup> on his way to the king. They averred that the chiefs present at the massacre, viz., Ologboshi [Ollubusheri], Obahawaie, Obaiuwana [Obaynagmo], Usu, Ugiagbe [Ujiagbe], and Obadesagbo [Obaradesagmo] were those by whose instruction the white men were killed. Obahawaie was said to have been seen cutting off a white man's head, but of the others only their boys were seen doing this. On the strength of this evidence,

<sup>1</sup> This is the stick mentioned by Boisragon as having been borrowed from him by Phillips, in order that the messenger might have a token of the peaceful disposition of the Expedition to show the king. It has always been the custom to send a stick as a proof that the messenger is *bonâ fidé*. Nana, Dudu, Ocorowala, Chinomi, Dore and all the Jekri chiefs have been in the habit of having costly sticks with embossed silver heads presented to them, and these were the sticks sent with the messengers.



the four chiefs Obahawaie, Obaiuwana, Ugiagbe, and Usu were taken prisoners. But Obaiuwana committed suicide with a knife he had concealed in his loin-cloth, on his being put in the guard room hut, which was quite dark at the time. Captain Koe was with him in the hut, searching the other two, when Obaiuwana cut his throat from ear to ear, whereupon his body was taken to the front of the king's compound and hung up for a day and then buried.

When the court reassembled the four prisoners gave their evidence. Obahawaie told the court that for the last six years, since Nana's town was taken, the King of Benin expected white men would be coming to Benin city. For this reason a few of the fighting men were kept on the Gwato road as a guard to prevent the town being surprised. The king, Overami, did not know anything about the massacre in question, because he did not come out of his house, and even if he wanted to go anywhere, he merely would go near his fence and turn back. "If all the people of this town were in his court as we are here now, he had nothing to do with them. Whenever anything happened, the king would call the chiefs and tell them, and they did what they thought fit. We were in this town about five days before the massacre, having a big play,<sup>1</sup> when we heard that white men were coming with war. The king then called the people, and told them 'the white man is bringing war—now if you go you must not fight with him—let them come, and if they like they can come and see me and say anything they have to say. Perhaps they are coming to play [to pay a friendly visit]; you do not know, you must allow them to come and if it is war, we will find out.'" But the big chiefs, amongst whom Ologboshi and Iyasherri [Yaceri] were specially mentioned, overruled the king's orders, and in spite of his (Obahawaie's) protests ordered him to massacre, saying other men would be sent to kill him if he did not destroy the white men. He went so far as to say that the king had even offered kola nuts to Iyasherri, begging him not to fight the white men. He acknowledged the white men were quite unarmed, and that even the cutlasses of the carriers had been tied up and put away in the launch. The chiefs who he said were present at the massacre were Arabato, Osague, Usu, Obamoye [Obamoi], and Obajuhomua, while the following chiefs sent boys: Iyaja, Aiyeboba, Osagwe, Obaseki, Ine, Ihanre, Obajnaie, and Ahando. He said while he was talking to Isayeri's messengers he heard firing, and a white man ran past him, whom none of his people touched.

Usu likewise defended the king, saying: "The king called me and sent me to tell the people not to kill the white men. If they brought war to catch the king, or they came to play with him, the people must allow them to come. The king said since he was born there had not been any white men killed in Benin city, so no white man must be killed." He said that Ologboshi had countermanded the king's orders, saying Iyasherri had threatened to kill him if the white men were not killed. He complained of one of his boys attacking the Expedition and so getting him into trouble, as he did not get to the scene till the massacre was over; but Igbedio contradicted this saying he was there before. Usu also stated that the wounded white man was being taken to the city by Omaregboma, when one of Ochudi's men killed him.

Ugiagbe told the court he was stationed at Egbini, in order that when a white man came from the Jekries he could take him to the king and bring him back. He said he had protested against the war, but being a small boy he was told to shut his mouth, being overruled by Ologboshi and Obadesagbo, and that Ojuma had also been sent to fight. He was not sent by the king.

Omaregboma, who was stationed at Gwato to take white men to the king, said: "Ohebo came and met me at Gwato, and told me that the chiefs sent him to say that they had heard that plenty white men were coming, and I must send to tell the king what they brought. Ohebo had not come from Benin city yet when the white men came, and I allowed them a room where they put all their things, so I asked

<sup>1</sup> The big play was the ceremony of celebrating his father's death, and this was the reason the king gave to Phillips when he requested Phillips not to approach.

Ohebo to look at the things that the white men brought. They had neither guns nor swords. The only cutlasses that the carriers had were tied up and put in the launch; I made Ohebo look at them so that he could tell the chiefs what they wanted when he came to Benin city. It was evening, so the white men slept at Gwato and in the morning they started for Benin City. I undertook to lead them, so I was in front of them." The white men slept at Egbini, Herbert Clarke<sup>1</sup> having requested him to go ahead to make preparations for them. He said he found the boys on the road waiting to fight the white men, and on seeing this went in search of Ologboshi, to whom he went on his knees, imploring him not to kill the white men, but while he was doing this the massacre took place. One white man ran to him for protection, and he left him to find Herbert Clarke, who was still living, but he could not find the latter, and on his return was told Ochudi's boys had killed the other white man. He accused Usu of lying about this white man. He mentioned the anger and fear of the king when told of the massacre, and accused the following chiefs of implication in it: Usu, Obahawie, Ologboshi, Obaiuwana, Obadesagbo; he saw present boys of all the chiefs except those of Ojumo and Aro.

Idiaie's evidence was to the effect that he was sent by the white man, who gave him a message with a stick to hand to the king. On meeting the chiefs Ologboshi, Obadesagbo, Osague, Obahawie, and Obaiuwana on the road, he told them that the white men were coming, but unarmed. Usu, whom he also met, told him he had a message from the king, to tell the people not to kill the white men. He handed the stick to the king with the message that the white men were not coming with war. "So the king sent me back to tell the people not to kill the white men. When I reached Ojumo's I met some Kru-boys and heard that the white men had been killed. Every time that the white men sent us with sticks, the sticks were always left in the house where the white men used to stay, called Owiahu; so I left the white man's stick there."

The great chief Aro told the court that the Jekries sent word to Benin that the white men were coming with war, at which news the king was much concerned, as since the time of his grandfather, no white man had made war against Benin; neither the king nor Ojumo wished to fight. There was some doubt as to the white man sending sometime beforehand saying he was coming. He was of opinion the people did the massacre to bring trouble on the king.

King Overami's statement was largely to insist that he had always been a friend to the white man, exchanging presents with him, allowing him to visit Benin, and that his orders were that the white men were not to be killed.

The prisoners were allowed to cross-examine, but the evidence of the three chief witnesses was not upset in any material point. The court adjourned until September 3rd, when the Consul-General, having asked the chiefs what was the law in case of killing, and being told by chief Alea 'the native law is that if a chief kills a chief, a chief must be killed,' summed up by saying that seven white chiefs having been killed, seven native chiefs must be killed; but as the king and others had for some years been under the impression that the white man was coming with war, there was a natural doubt in their minds, when Phillips' party came, as to whether it meant war; as to defend their country was a proper thing, he would give the king and chiefs the benefit of the doubt; but as regards the chiefs who were present at the massacre, after learning that the white man was not bringing war, there could be no doubt in their case, and the court found that Obaiuwana, Ologboshi, Obadesagbo, Usu, Obahawie, and Ugiagbe were all guilty of the murder of Phillips' party on the Gwato road on the 4th January, 1897. Of these, Obaiuwana had already committed suicide, Obadesagbo had died of fear of punishment, and Ugiagbe, being a boy, was passed over. There remained then Ologboshi still at large, who, in his absence, was condemned to be shot; and Usu and Obahawie who were condemned to be shot the next morning. Two chiefs being about to pay the penalty of their crimes,

<sup>1</sup> A half caste about 25 years of age; educated in England; Government interpreter.

there remained five more to forfeit their lives to make up the seven native chiefs to be killed for the seven white chiefs killed, but the natives, including the king, would be forgiven if they produced Ologboshi to be executed for the part he had taken in the massacre. The Consul-General added that the five chiefs to suffer the penalty of the law would be chosen by him. This was considered diplomatic on his part, as all the chiefs would try to catch Ologboshi, for none knew which of them would be chosen, the doubt as to the final decision giving them a personal interest in the capture. The Consul-General then remarked: "This is no idle threat, and I solemnly promise to do what I say." The natives, owing to their knowledge of the country naturally had a better chance of catching Ologboshi than Europeans.

On the first day of the big palaver, the king came down loaded with coral and with a coral hat; the latter consisted of a tight fitting cap made of coral beads, and having two wings, one on each side, something like the old Viking's headgear one sees in pictures at the present day (See fig. 85). He seemed to take the proceedings with outward composure and sat mopping his brow all the time. The last day, he appeared in a black beaver hat, evidently belonging to Dudu, one of the Jekri chiefs, as it had this chief's name in large gold letters on the front.

The execution of the two chiefs took place without any trouble. The Consul-General then waited to see whether there was any chance of capturing the real instigator of the Phillips' massacre, Ologboshi. In the meanwhile, the Consul-General had explained to the king and the chiefs, who had now surrendered with their sovereign, what had already been told to the other chiefs, namely, the arrangements which had been made for carrying on the government of the country by the native chiefs themselves. Also that the king could no longer order the people about as before, but that proper villages would be apportioned to him, with servants, food, and all other necessities as for a big chief, for he would probably still be the biggest chief, that position depending upon his ability to govern. At the same time, the Consul-General proposed to take the king and two or three chiefs, with their wives and servants, on a tour for a year or so to Calabar, Lagos, and the Yoruba country to see how other lands were governed. The king and chiefs were to go home and discuss these matters, and especially what they proposed to do to catch Ologboshi, and then come to the palaver house on the 9th September and reply to the proposals of the Consul-General. They were specially warned not to leave the city, in answer to which the chief Ochudi naively said: "Overami will not go to the bush; he has been there before and what is the use of his going back again." However, when the 9th came, as the king refused to appear, the Consul-General sent Capt. Carter and Lieut. Gabbett with fifty men to take the king prisoner, and bring him down. The king, hearing of this, fled to the bush, so that when the detachment got to his house, no one was there. The Consul-General summoned the chiefs and said that if they did not find the king by 4 p.m. he would burn all the houses and shoot every chief; this threat had the desired effect, and Ojumo stated that the king was in hiding at his compound about three-quarters of a mile away. Captain Roupell and a few men of the force found the king in a bush hut practically alone; as the men entered he darted out at the back door, and eventually ran into the arms of some of the search party. Had it been otherwise, all the force would have been obliged to take to the bush in the rains to search for him. The king was marched back to the palaver house, where the Consul-General sentenced him to be banished from his country for life.

An officer was now ordered to take the king down to Gwato *en route* for Old Calabar, on Monday, 13th September. The king's wives, some eighty in number, were handed back to the families they belonged to. The king proposed taking down two of his wives, and in the meanwhile he resided in the guard-room, closely watched, very downcast, and refusing all food provided for him. He had some days previous to his attempted escape, offered the Consul-General 200 puncheons (£1500 worth) of oil to escape exile, and since then he offered in exchange for his liberty to disclose where his 500 ivory tusks were buried; his coral, he said, had been stolen by

his own "boys." On September 15th the king was brought safely down to Gwato by Capts. Carter and Henniker, and placed on the Protectorate yacht at anchorage below Gilli-Gilli. Capt. Carter was left in charge of him. The king was agitated and violent when awakened at 4 a.m., but was put in a hammock and strapped in; he commenced to holloa, and consequently had to be gagged so as to get him out of the city before day-light without any row, which was effectually done. With this exception, which was a necessity, the king was treated throughout with every courtesy. The party consisted of sixty men protected by a Maxim so as to be able to overcome any opposition which might possibly attempt a rescue, though this was improbable. His majesty took everything he saw on the yacht very philosophically, although he had, like his predecessors, not been outside the city walls since he was made king, and was only accustomed to leave his compound once or twice in a year to shew himself to his subjects. The only things or beings he craved for were his two wives, who followed him with the Consul-General's party and joined him a few weeks afterwards.

The difficulty the British experienced in dealing with the king was due to the fact that he was himself a big ju-ju, in which the natives had unbounded confidence. They believed he would never be captured, and that if the British did succeed in arriving at the city, he would turn into a bird or some animal and so escape. Nor was he considered bloodthirsty by his subjects. The whole system of massacres was part and parcel of their daily life, to which they were thoroughly accustomed, and if they blamed anyone it was the fetish priests, not their king. Besides, it was mostly the slaves who were sacrificed. It was, therefore, judged probable that a rescue might be attempted, which would only lead to further bloodshed and prevent the pacification of the country, already too long delayed by the king's six months' sojourn in the bush. The removal of the king was also desirable, to show the people the uselessness of their resistance to the white man's power.

After considerable bush-fighting Ologboshi was captured on the 27th May, 1897; he was brought to trial before a full court and condemned to death on the 27th June, for being the chief instigator of the murder of the members of Phillips' expedition. He was hanged on the 28th June, 1897. His trial confirmed the verdict of the court which sat on the king, namely that Ologboshi, and not Overami, was the prime instigator of the massacre.

#### IV

### ON THE BRITISH LOSS OF ANTIQUE WORKS OF ART FROM BENIN

WHEN on the return of the members of the Punitive Expedition it became known that fine specimens of bronze castings and ivory and wood carvings had been found in the old city of Great Benin, Mr. Charles H. Read, the Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum, with characteristic energy at once endeavoured to secure for the national collection good representative specimens of these bronzes, and he succeeded in gathering together the finest collection of plaques that is to be found in any Museum. But owing to the want of proper pecuniary support, he was not able to obtain possession of any of the more expensive, and in many cases equally interesting, articles. Not only was the national institution thus deprived of its lawful acquisitions, but at the same time another government department sold for a few hundred pounds a large number of castings which had cost thousands to obtain, as well as much blood of our fellow countrymen. Hence it is that so many Bini articles are not represented at all at Bloomsbury. Had it not been for the well-known interest which the late General Pitt-Rivers took in such subjects, a still larger portion

of these articles would have been lost to us for ever. Money with him being no object, he purchased largely and succeeded in making a very varied and, therefore, most interesting collection, which is still to be seen in his Museum at Farnham. From what I can ascertain, the bulk of these bronzes has been secured by the Germans, and it is especially annoying to Englishmen to think that such articles, which for every reason should be retained in this country, have been allowed to go abroad. Not that I wish to, nor do I blame the Germans in the least for what they have done, but it is only one more example of their alertness, and of our apathy. These articles have been lost to us, directly through the want of funds, but indirectly owing to grave omissions on our part in times gone by, to circumstances indeed which unfortunately continue. To many, this loss is apparently a small matter when compared with great domestic questions of the day, nevertheless the principle involved is an important one.

For many years the Germans have foreseen that the study of native races and their development, a study known to us under the awkward name of Anthropology, is essential to every civilised community which trades with, or is called upon to govern native communities, and with their characteristic thoroughness they have become leaders in a branch of science in which the Americans alone have been able to equal them, and, as it now appears, are about to outstrip them. To arrive at this position the German ethnologists have always been sympathetically dealt with by their Government; and when the Government can no longer supply the funds, I am told the Kaiser, on application being made to him, will put his hand in his pocket, and when that source is closed the wealthy German merchants are not appealed to in vain. For such gifts they will receive their Sovereign's approbation. Similarly, in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, when a museum is in want of funds, an appeal is made to local merchants, and in a few hours the necessary money is collected. Such measures for collecting money do not appear to have been tried in England, and if tried it is doubtful what success such an attempt would meet with. There remains the fact that with us the native races are not adequately studied, and we are consequently handicapped politically, scientifically, and commercially in competition with other nations.

Politically, it is of the first importance that our governing officials should have a thorough knowledge of the native races subject to them—and this is the knowledge that anthropology can give them—for such knowledge can teach what methods of government and what forms of taxation are most suited to the particular tribes, or to the stage of civilization in which we find them. In connection with this, there can be no doubt that with adequate knowledge much spilled bloodshed could have been saved in the past, both on our frontiers and in our colonies.

Scientifically, the loss is great from whatever point we look at it, and it is not lessened by the painful feeling that our successors will condemn us for neglecting to make use of our opportunities—opportunities which they will never have, either to use or abuse—and take steps towards attempting to give them adequate records of the native races of our times. Unlike the Tasmanians or the ancient Peruvians, the West African will never be wiped off the face of the earth, but intercourse with the white man alters his beliefs, ideas, customs, and technology, and proper records of these should be made before we destroy them. The destruction is going on apace, one of the chief contributory causes being the unsuitable European teaching given to the native races generally—unsuitable to them on account of the wide physical and mental differences that exist between the white and black man. Miss Kingsley put the point with her usual smartness when she said at one of the meetings of the Fellows of the Royal Colonial Institute, that “an African is no more an undeveloped European than a rabbit is an undeveloped hare.” All the same, we conduct our intercourse with the African just as though he were an individual who could be turned into a European. That he has great possibilities no one will doubt, but a good general knowledge of native races would prevent us making such grave mistakes as this.



Of the historical value of the study of native races, there should at the present day be no question. This study has not only assisted classical students in the elucidation of many doubtful points in the history of the Greeks and Romans, but it is of extreme importance in explaining to us so much that would be otherwise obscure in the study of the growth of our national institutions.

At the British Association meeting held at Ipswich in 1895, Professor Haddon in deploring the inattention paid to the study of native races in England, pointed out that if an Englishman wished to learn anything about the coloured peoples under British sway without actually visiting them, he had to go to Berlin to do so.<sup>1</sup> To put this statement in a different form, it means that we have to pay other countries for information which we ought to have within our own doors, for it means that we must spend money to go abroad to get the knowledge, and it also means that we must buy foreign books when we ourselves should be the suppliers to foreigners. By a knowledge of native races we get to learn what they want, and by a method of systematic publication of information about the natives, valuable assistance could be rendered to our traders, very much in the same way as we are served by Consular Reports from foreign countries. A short time ago Lord Salisbury, at the suggestion of the Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum, agreed that it was advisable to collect anthropological information for arrangement and diffusion by an Ethnological Bureau, but was unable to make arrangements to carry out such a scheme, because there were no political leaders who cared to give him the necessary support. A very distinguished African traveller and administrator, in fact, probably our most successful African administrator of the day, is inclined rather to blame the public, than public men, for this apathy, saying the leaders would make a move if the public demanded it. But the leaders are there to lead, not to be led. Where indeed would Germany be now if she had waited for public opinion to raise the question? It was her able, far-seeing leaders in times gone by who made her present prominent position for her. And who are the Governors of our Colonies who have been most successful in dealing with the native races under their charge? They are men like Sir Wm. McGregor and the Rajahs Sir James and Charles Brooke, in Sarawak. In New Guinea, Sir Wm. McGregor encouraged his officials to study the natives, with the result that they became interested in those they were put over to govern and governed them wisely. Sir William is now repeating his New Guinea success in Lagos. Of one of Sarawak's governors, Dr. Chas. Hose and his youthful aide-de-camp, it was pithily said, at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, that he and a boy governed a district over 10,000 square miles in extent—and he could do so simply because he had studied his subjects and required no physical force to aid him to keep order. This is a very different policy from that adopted by a Governor of one of our older West African colonies, who refused a medical officer, an official of the colony, permission to study the natives.

It has been of late the fashion to decry the older universities, but strangely enough as regards this study, they are the only seats of learning in England where the student can obtain the knowledge he is in search of.<sup>2</sup> At Cambridge, Professor Haddon has set to work to remedy the state of things he deplored when at Ipswich, and with contagious enthusiasm has gathered round himself a band of energetic young

<sup>1</sup> The Germans took possession of the Samoa Group, some four years or so ago, and have already in the press an excellent Gazetteer, which gives a most useful account of the native population. We have now been in possession of the Fiji Group for about forty years, and are still asking: Where is our Gazetteer of the Fijis?

<sup>2</sup> We have at the present moment the curious spectacle of the University of Birmingham, which advertises itself in the pages of *Nature* as the "up-to-date" University, thinking it has covered the whole field of the study of native races, when it arranges for a simple course of Physical Anthropology, and leaves out of all consideration the other equally important branches of the study, such as the Social and Religious Institutions, the Technology, and Linguistics of Native Races, and their Ethnography and Archaeology. No university of the British Empire has the right to call itself "up-to-date," which ignores the study of the hundreds of millions of coloured people under our sway.



men who are a credit to the country. At Oxford we have the priceless museum presented to the University by the late General Pitt-Rivers, at the solicitation of his friend, Professor Tylor, and presided over by Mr. H. Balfour. What is the use of these institutions if their teaching is ignored?

I cannot help thinking that if some of the above facts had been known to, or appreciated by the gentlemen who disposed of the Bini antique works of art, they would have adopted proper means for keeping the articles in this country, and so saved us an ultimate loss which far exceeds in value the few hundred pounds made by the sale.

## V

### LAND TENURE AND INHERITANCE IN YORUBA

By CYRIL PUNCH

UNTIL recently very little attention has been given to defining native custom as regards property in land. The older travellers in West Africa were inclined to apply European methods of thought to African conditions, and they considered that occupiers of land were owners of land in the same sense that we hold land in England. The African demurred to having a foreign system imposed on him, and enquiry showed that the subject was complicated and would require serious study. In all our West African colonies we began to make enquiry of the natives as to what their real views on the subject might be. The law officers and others in the various colonies have examined witnesses and made reports, and though doubtless there is still room for much study, the native ideas of land tenure are now fairly well understood. Sir William MacGregor in Lagos has thoroughly gone into the matter, and has caused the officials under him to make enquiry among the natives and send in reports. Aided by his great experience of native races, he will be able to sift and apprise the evidence obtained through these different sources and his own observation, and we may look to him for a definite exposition of what is the real state of the case. As it is, there seems to be a great similarity in the views expressed by natives all over Africa, and the central idea seems to be that 'individual ownership of land,' in our sense, is contrary to native custom. Dependant on this, it is further laid down that land cannot be sold. There can be no dispute that these two main ideas are almost universally expressed by natives who are willing to give an opinion. They represent in fact 'the spirit of the times' in Africa on this subject.

Nevertheless, some doubt must still linger in a careful enquirer's mind as to whether the native really has possessed a system of land tenure handed down from his ancestors, or whether the better educated part of the race has not constructed a theory of custom, in order to meet the danger of European invasion with its resultant alienation of native land. Personally, having been in West Africa for twenty years, I seem to recall a time when any such generalisation as that individual ownership is contrary to native ideas would not have been understood. The theory appears to me, at all events as far as Lagos is concerned, probably to have originated about fifteen years ago. In course of inquiries made among the Egbas, I have met instances of natives who declare that land was owned individually, and that sales did sometimes take place, and it is universally allowed that the pawning both of hereditary farmlands and fishing grounds was a common practice. One of the ablest and most educated of the Lagos natives, in relating the ancient history or tradition of the race, has stated that Oranyan, the founder of the ancient Owyau, willed his

property as follows: to the king of Benin was left his money, to the king of Ketu his crowns, while the land, as such, was to descend to the kings of Ife and Awyaw. The Ife branch willingly accepted the land for its share, as it was obvious that land would be necessary to the others, who would be forced to pay for it out of their property in other ways. It is a proverb known to all Yorubas, that the Oni of Ife owns the land.

In the face of the above ideas and traditions, going back to the earliest days of the race, one cannot but have some doubts as to the accuracy of a positive assertion, however commonly repeated, that individual ownership of land is contrary to African custom. I have met a native, and a very intelligent one too, who gave me to understand that the theory, at any rate in its very positive form, originated in the advice given by Governor Glover to the natives not to sell their lands to Europeans, and he informed me messages were sent all over the country laying down the doctrine as at present current. While thus expressing a certain amount of doubt as to the existence of any clearly defined custom of great antiquity, I am free to confess that there is at present a very intelligible and commonly received expression of racial customs on the subject, and I describe below what enquiry has led me to believe the native customs to be.

It is to my mind by no means certain that the natives will always continue to hold the same views on land tenure. With the advance of agriculture one cannot but hope a more personal feeling of ownership of, and interest in farms will arise. Virgin forest is becoming scarce; used-up land, or temporarily exhausted land, is very common; and unless there is a feeling of absolute ownership one cannot look for any keen attempt to improve the lands as farmed, at any rate in the present state of development of African society. I believe the fear of Europeans buying the land away from its native holders is not well founded, and one cannot but feel that a time may easily come, when inability to sell or purchase land amongst the natives themselves will be an absolute hindrance to progress.

Having expressed these doubts I proceed to state what seem to be the present ideas as to land tenure and inheritance. I regret that while in Benin I paid no attention to the subject. It may well be that the centralisation of all proprietorship in the king there may have altered the usual customs in West Africa. Undoubtedly the king claimed every man to be his slave. The nobles had villages and farms, but I should not like to say that their adherents, who lived in the villages and cultivated the farms, were in effect their slaves. I do not remember any slaves at all in Gwatto. Among the Yorubas the following is, I believe, an accurate account of land tenure.

Firstly the tribes were nomadic, or at any rate the present population came from the north. There are no traces of any race anterior to the Yorubas. Take the Egbas as an example, the land was parted among the families, or sub-tribes. The uncultivated land was common property of the tribe, the hunters of each tribe knew the approximate boundaries of the land of the tribe, and kept the hunting for members of the tribe. Land was cleared by individuals for farming, and if the individual was a member of the tribe he asked no one's permission before clearing and taking possession of forest land. Suppose an individual so cleared a farm in the middle of the forest, he became owner of the farmland cleared, but could not sell it. If he vacated it, it would revert to forest, but he would still have a right of reoccupying. The farmland so cleared would descend to his family.

Property in Yoruba is of three kinds, viz:

- (a) The Dwelling House.
- (b) Farmland.
- (c) Personality, such as goods, money, etc.

(a) The dwelling house was family property for always, could not be sold, and any descendant, at any time, had the right to return and shelter in it. In the Jebu country cases would come before the native authorities in which a debtor would plead impecuniosity and would be still living comfortably in the family house. He could not be turned out, nor could any sort of charge be made on the house to pay his debts.

The Awujale would sometimes place crossed peeled wands (cf. Benin) in the doorway, and prevent all entrance to the house till the family paid the debts, but I always felt that this was a latter day expedient, and contrary to the feeling of the country.

(b) Farmland was a family inheritance. It could not be sold, nor could it be taken away for debt, though a man in debt could pawn his land, or rather he could pawn the use of it. For the crimes of witchcraft or treasonable correspondence with the country's enemy, a man could be outlawed, and then his land would be forfeited, or perhaps to put it more correctly, he might be driven out from his land and his membership of the tribe. When farms were pawned for debt, two states of affairs were recognised. A man could pawn the use of his farm and reserve to himself the right to collect palm nuts and kolas, and the occupant could not cut down or injure the palm or kola trees. The farm could also be pawned with the palm or kola trees on it. Nothing in the shape of foreclosure was recognised. The farm would be redeemable at any time by the original debtor, or by any member of his family. If one son out of several found the means of redeeming a pawned farm he would obtain possession, but the other members of the family could at any time make offer of their share of the redemption money and claim a share of the land. A man during his lifetime could make a present of part of his farms to a friend, but according to native statement in no case could this amount to a sale. I have some doubts as to whether or no the natives have really thought out this question of the giving of land. It is done and the donee continues in possession, but I am inclined to think it would depend to some extent on his personal character and status, as to whether his title would continue valid as against children of the donor.

Daughters as well as sons inherited farm land. If a person own many farms they would be divided among his children. The eldest son would take the biggest. Probably the children would be in effective occupation of certain farms during the parents' lifetime. Young children and daughters unable to farm the land, would not take possession of their portions. The elder brother would possess in trust for them.

A daughter married to a man of another tribe would inherit, and if the husband took up his abode with the tribe, he would continue in occupation of his wife's land, provided there were no children. In event of children they would inherit the mother's land, but they also would have to reside and be members of the tribe.

If an Ibadan man married an Egba woman, the children would be Egbas, if they continued to live in Egba land, and they would inherit their mother's property in land. If, however, the father took them to live in Ibadan land, they would not own the mother's land unless they decided to return to Egba country.

Fishing grounds on the Ogun river were possessed similarly to farm land.

Virgin forest is common to the tribe, at least so one is told, but in Jebu, along the banks of the Oshun, one hears a different story. Here there is, or was, a considerable quantity of mahogany. The forest in fact, was found to have a commercial value. So one finds powerful chiefs, like Kuku, claiming ownership over forest tracts, and further, obtaining by means of what are practically deeds of sale, though often for very small consideration received, the ownership of pieces of forest likely to contain mahogany trees.

The custom of inheritance of slaves is not known to me sufficiently to speak of. Whether they are family property, as land, or treated as personality, I am not prepared to say. Personality, i.e., goods, money, cowries, etc., does not go to the children but to the brother, or if none, to the sister of deceased. Brothers and sisters by the same mother only, are nearer akin than brothers and sisters by the same father. In the event of there being no landed property, the brother or sister inheriting would have to give a certain portion to the children, and in all cases would have to provide for them and act as guardian. The division of property would be made by family council assisted by the elders of the town.

On taking possession of land, whether by inheritance, gift, or by pawn, no ceremonies are gone through in the Egba country.

Boundaries of farms are marked by heaps of earth in which are planted any of the following trees: Perigun (*Dracæna* sp.), Akoko (*Newbouldia lævis*), Akika (*Spondias lutea*), Lubuteji (*Curcas purgans*), and several others. Kola trees (*Sterculia acuminata*) growing in the forest often mark the sites of old farms, and form a proof of ownership.

In the conquest of one tribe by another, property and persons taken during actual fighting become the spoil of the victors.

Submission once made, the conquered tribe becomes subject, but individuals are not enslaved, nor are farm lands or other property confiscated by the victors.

In treating the question of land tenure I would deprecate any very positive generalisation, or acceptance of any cut-and-dried theories. The natives should be made to feel that they will not be ousted by Europeans from the enjoyment and development of their land, and then the absolute terms of land tenure may be left to settle themselves by the law of expediency and justice.

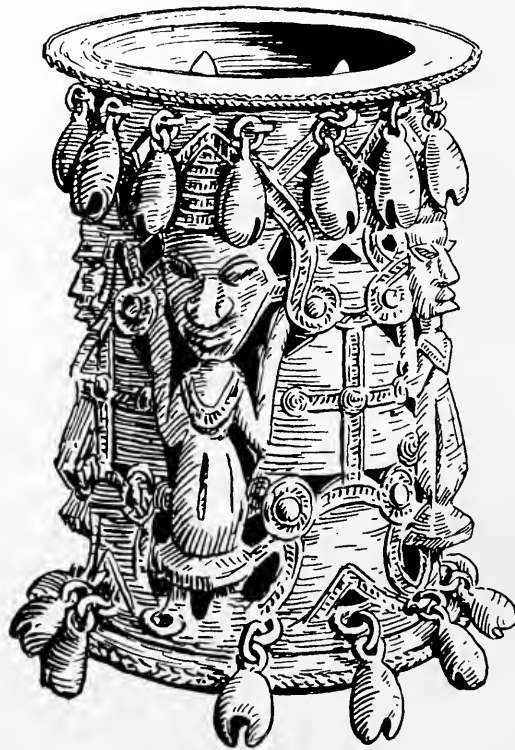


FIG. 275.—Bronze Armlet (?) from the north-west boundary of Benin territory. Height 5in. (12.7 cm.). In the possession of Graham Nicholas, Esq., The Bowers, Barkisland, Halifax.

# INDEX

- Aa, A. J. van der, 2  
 Abiala, a mythical people, 12  
 Aboynagbo, title, 94  
 Accuser punished if his case not proven, 85  
 Access to king difficult, 92  
 Adams, Capt. John, 3  
 Ado, first name of Benin, 9  
 Adolo, King Overami's father, 70; wives of, 100  
 Adubowa succeeds to throne and takes name Uverami (Overami), 100  
 Adultery, punishment for, 39  
*Aegis*, 225  
 Affonso V., 4  
 Agate ornaments, 26, 27; *see* coral  
 Agbe, King's boy, 64, 100  
 Aguramasi, King's boy, 64, 100, 123  
 Ahammangiwa makes first castings, 230  
 Ahuraku priest, limited to his town, 53; 'Parson,' 54; feathers, 68; makes his head, 75, 76, 116; the Malaku priest, 167  
 Aiaccio (Corsica) Father Angelo Maria d', 15  
 Akori or blue coral, 133  
 Alagwe, juju, 53, 55; water spirt, 90  
 Albinos, 19  
*Albizzia* sp., 142  
 Alcoves, dark, 167, 187, 188, 217  
 Alguns Documentos, 6  
 Alligator, with light in its head, 90  
 Altars, 59, 68, 169, 171, 173, 184; conical shaped, 218; fetish cone, 168  
 Ambassadors sent to Portugal, 5  
*Amomum paradisii*, 4, 143  
 Animals sacrificed, 52, 69, 71, 72, 76, 79, 98  
 Annesley, Vice-Consul, 3  
 Annual sacrifices, 52, 72; driving out of spirits, 55; parades of King, 74, 95  
 Appearance of the people, 16  
 Appointments when made, 95  
 Arbon, or Argon, 11  
 Architecture, Yoruba, limits of, 182; origin of Bini, 184  
*Ardea alba*, 80  
 Are de Roe (street king's), 92  
 Armlets, 31; ivory, 205  
 Army, 126, 127  
 Arribo, 91, 95  
 Arrows, 125, x  
 Art, foreign forms in, 209; two styles observable in castings, 224  
*Artocarp* sp., 149  
 Arthus, 1  
 Asije (Esige) King, arrival of whitemen 7; compound dedicated to, 54; stories of, 55, 229  
 Assegais, 125  
 Atolo, *see* Jambra  
*Atrium*, 129, 167, 169  
 Authority of King, 91, 92  
 Aveiro, Joham Affonso de, 4  
*Avicennia* sp., 143  
 Axe, 134  
 Bacon, R. H., Commander, 4  
 Badagry subject to Benin, 13; bodies of chiefs sent to Benin, 13  
 Bambu wine, 149  
*Baphia nitida*, 134  
 Batalha-Reis, 1  
 Barbot, Jean, 2  
 Barros, Joao de, 1  
 Bawaku, King's brother loses his birthright and flees, 100  
 Beads, artificial, 27; *see* Coral  
 Beans, 131, 147; used in games, 155  
 Beauty of the town, 175  
 Beauvais, Palisot de, 3  
 Beds, 166  
 Belzoni, 3; papers of, 118  
 Benin, discovery of, 4; not a rich country, 5; size of, 5; first name of, Ado, 9; list of kings, 6; average reign of kings, 7; kings descended from the Oni of Ife, 13; description of country, 11; extent of the kingdom, 12, 13  
 Benson, 2  
 Bey, 3  
 Big men, Great Lords, Homo Grans, 83, 91, 92, 93, 110; dress of, 117;  
 Big water, offerings swept into, 57  
 Bird John and W., 2  
 Bird, King of Benin could turn into a, 62  
 Birds, copper, 160, 161, 163, 168; *see* turkeys  
 Birthright lost; Bawaku and Orukutu, 100  
 Blair, Vice-Consul, 3.  
 Bleasby, 3  
 Blomert (Bloemart, Blommart), Samuel, 2  
 Blood, human, collected in dishes, 43; sprinkled on altars, &c., 72, 76, 79, 175, x  
 Boisragon Capt., 4  
 Bolts, 187, 188  
 Bonny, a Bini embassy at, 13  
 Booty taken in war, 126, 127  
 Bosman, 2; unwarranted ridicule of Dapper, 2, 109  
 Boundary mark, 187  
 Bourdon (Pardon) wine, 83, 149  
 Bows, 125, x  
 Brass, neptune, 169; covering, 172, 174; on door, 177  
 Bribes, 89, 91

- Brinckman, Dr. J., 4  
 Broad avenue or street of Benin, 158, 163, 171, 173  
 Brothers of king killed, 99  
 Bry, de, 1  
 Bull roarer, 65  
 Bulwark wall, 162, 163  
 Burial, 41-44; ground 175  
 Burton, Sir Richard, 3  
 "Business," 123  
 Calabashes, 153  
 Caladesan King, son of founder of Gwato, 53  
*Calamus Barteri*, 189; *Calamus* sp., 145  
 Calico cloth a prophylactic, 62  
 Call for deer, 144  
 Cannibalism, 6; unknown, 47  
 Cannon, old, 125, 173  
 Canoes, 6; requisitioned, 135  
 Captain of War, *see* War Captain  
 Captives rescued from pits, 68, 69, xii  
 Cardamoms, 4  
*Carica papaya*, 187  
 Carli, Denis de, 2  
 Carlsen, Dr. F., 4  
 Carpenters, 140  
 Carving, on rafters, 176, 177; on ivory, 193; how done, 196; on coco nuts, 205; woodwork, 209  
 Casket, 223  
 Castagnets, 153  
 Castings, hidden in the walls, 217; how produced, 226; not produced under supervision of the king, 228; origin of, 229  
 Catfish (meerkatse) to eat, 131; carved, 196; evolution of, 219; in castings, 225  
 Cattle, 148; bullocks, 175  
 Cauldrons, copper, as drums, 80  
*Cavadium*, 167  
 Ceiling, 187  
 Chalcedony beads, 27; *see* Coral  
 Chalk, sticks, 59; a prophylactic 62  
 Chants, monotonous, 154  
 Character, 45  
 Charms, to make hunter invisible, 145  
 Cheetham, Samuel, 3  
 Chests, wooden dugouts, 177  
 Chiefs, extortions by, 46; laziness of, 47  
 Childbirth, 35  
 Children, wear no clothing, 24; the king's property, 91; inherit from mother, 97; unkindness to, unusual, 104  
 Chiffau, heir elect, 99  
*Chlorophora excelsa*, 101  
 Christianity, vestiges of, 14  
 Cicatrisation (*fradus*) 6, 33, 91; brutality of, 34; Ijos, 34  
 Circumcision, 35  
*Cire Perdue* process, 226  
 Cistern, *see* *Imphivium*  
 Civil War, 14, 164  
 Clarke, Hugh Crawford, 3  
 Clay, pipes, 59; figures, 64, 217  
 Climate, unhealthiness of, 104  
 Cloth, of gold and silver tissue, 74; curiously woven, 131, 140; great value of, 141; measurements, 141  
 Clothing, 21; people only clothed by permission of the king, 24; buried with king, 43  
 Cocks, bronze, 218  
 Coconut carving, 205  
 Coffins, 42  
 Colour of skin, 17, 18, 19, 65, 80  
 Compound erected in king's memory, 101, 102, 159  
*Compluvium*, 167  
 Cone of clay, fetish, 168; small round altar, 184; conical altars, 218  
 Confidence of the Bini in their king, xviii  
 Conversion of natives, 6, 14  
 Cookhouse (kitchens), 158, 177  
 Coral (Agate, Chalcidony, Jasper), beads returnable to king, 26, 42; wearing coral a royal privilege, 25, 26; authority to wear not hereditary, 93; loss a cause for execution, 95; sacrifice, 71; festival, 74, 76; immersed in human blood, 76; delight of native on receipt of, 96; beads, 19; apron, 22; value of, 26; blue, 133; cap, 20, 27; head dress, 74; hair dressing, 80; shirt, 99; for king, 113; on king's dress, xiii, xvii; king's stolen, xvii; neck bands, 26; necklaces, 80, 83, 94, 95, 99, 117; worn by king's wives, 115; ornaments, use of wide spread in Africa, 27  
 Cornet, 80, 153  
 Corpse kept above ground, 42  
 Cotton wool, 131; spun, 132; indigenous, 141  
 Council of Big Men, 85, 93  
 Courses, wall, 172  
 Courtesans, 37, 97  
 Courtesy, 45  
 Courtiers, 107  
 Court, Historian, 4; dress, 23; duties, 65; Higher of Justice, 91; Queen mother's, 119; Queen's, 160; King's, 160, 162, 169  
 Courts, open, 158, 160, 164  
 Cowardice of Bini alleged, 127  
 Cowries, 6; value of, 9; as dice, 89; king's income 96; let into walls, 128, 170; as money, 133, 134; introduction and value of, 140; in clay cone altar, 168  
 Coxon, 3  
 Credit, system of, 139  
 Criminal affairs, 91  
 Crotals, 222, 223  
 Crow, Capt. Hugh, 13  
 Crown, inheritance of, 98



- Crucifix from Benin, 5; of the old missionaries, 15, 16  
 Crucifixion, 64, 66, 69; trees, 51, 54, 55, 173, xi; not always sacrificial in character, 86  
 Cruelties of the sacrifices, 65, 66, 68, 69, xi  
*Curcas purgans*, xxiv  
 Curse, a Yoruba, 43  
 Customs duties, 136, 137  
 Cutlass held before the king, 116, 117  
*Cynodon dactylon*, sp. 16  
*Cyperus* sp., 142  
*Cypræa* sp. 140  
 Dapper, Dr. Olfort, 2; not present at court, 109; accounts confirmed by C. Punch, 136  
 Dancing, lascivious, 78; fetish 83; 77, 153; place, 166  
 Death, of a chief 42; without bloodshed, how punished, 86; not feared, 151  
 Death, people go to Ogiwo, 72; return to a better condition of life. 74  
 Decay of the City, 14  
 Decomposing human bodies, 66, 67, 68, 69  
 Deer hunting, 144  
 Destiny, good or bad, 76  
 Destruction of the City by fire, xii  
 Devil, sacrifices to, 49; reasoning about the, 51; Lolocou, 78  
 Dignified manner of chiefs, 18, 45  
 Disembowelling victims, 66, 69  
 Disguised men, 55, 57, 78, *see* masked men  
 Dishonesty of market women, 47  
 Distribution, of sacrificed animals, 52; of food, 71, 75, 148  
 Distorted carved human figures, 220  
 Ditch, 5, 158, 163, 189; ascribed to Oguola, 190  
 Doctor *versus* jujuman, 151  
 Dogs for food, 131; 148  
 Door, wooden, 158, 165, 166, 189; with stamped brass, 175, 177  
 Dore, chief, 4, 26  
 D.R., 1  
*Dracæna*, sp. xxiv.  
 Drains, 187  
 Dreams, 51  
 Dress, 83; of big men, 117; of king, xiii, xvii  
 Drink given to victims before slaughter, 64  
 Dropsy, 151  
 Drums, 77, 153; pressure, 205; copper cauldrons as, 80  
 Drunkards, 45  
 Dudu, chief, 4, 26  
 Dunne, Sam, 2  
 Dwarfs, 74; bronze, 218, 219  
 Dyeing, 141  
 Earthen pots, 70, 75  
*Ebanus sericeus*, 134  
 Egugus, drive out spirits, 55  
 Elephant hunter, 144  
 Eldest son, inherits, 97, 100, 101; rarely inherits, 99; if first reported to father, 100  
*Emberiza vidua*, 80  
 Enamelling, apparently unknown, 30  
*Erythrina umbrosa*, 187  
*Erythrophloeum guineense*, 88  
 Erisoyne, the introducer of the cast work, 229  
 Ese Ado, 181  
 Esige, *see* Asije  
 Eunuchs, 37, 40  
 Europeans, well treated, 136; disputes of, 201; short visits of, 234  
 Everybody the king's property, 101, or slaves, 103, 111  
 Ewagwe (Ongogue), 91, 95, 100 101  
 Eweke, first king, arrival of, 7; introduces human sacrifices, 70  
 Excuse, any for a sacrifice, 72  
 Execution, instruments, 56, 68, 74, 78; method of, 74, 85  
 Executioner, belonged to king's staff, 50; the king's, 94  
 Export of slaves stops human sacrifices, 103  
 Extortion by chiefs, 46; and by Ukoba, 94  
 Eye juice ordeal, 87  
 Fans, 107, 108, 123  
 Farquhar, 3  
 Fawckner, Capt. Jas., 3  
 Feather and clod ordeal, 87  
 Feathers, of priests, 67, 68; in chief's hair, 80  
 Feast, days, 52; of new yams, 57, 72, 76  
 Features of Bini refined, 18  
 Feet washing ceremony, 115, 123, 128  
 Females never (!) sacrificed, 70; children belong to father, 40; figures in castings, 222, 232, 233  
 Fertility of the people, 40  
 Fetish, 5, 166, 65; ceremony, 83; houses, 57, 165; observances, 48; Sobo, 200  
 Fetizero, 49  
*Fiadors*, 91, 93; for trading, 134, 135  
 Fights for succession to the throne, 100  
 Figuar, Filip da, 2  
 Finance minister, 93  
 Fines, 85; how distributed, 87; never reach the king, 96  
 Finger nail of king, 113  
 Firenze (Florence) Father Bonaventura da, 15  
 Fire, ordeal, 87; sitting round, 166; destroy the City, 12  
 Fish, trade, 134, 136, 144; pots, 143; smoked, 148; Bini do not, 144; rights, 144  
 Flood stayed by Asije, 55  
 Flutes, 80  
 Foliage pattern, 209  
 Food distribution, 71, 75, 108  
 Forbes, Dr. H. O., 4  
 Foreign ornamentation and designs adopted, 233

- Forest encroaching on Benin, 147, 149  
 Fowls, 131  
 Freemen do not expose themselves to sun, 65  
 Friendship, oath of, 61  
 Fruits, 147  
 Fufu, 148  
*Fulladors*, 95  
*Funtunia elastica*, 134  
 Furniture buried with the king, 43  
 Future life, in the sea, 52; with Ojiwo, 72  
 Galingales, 142  
 Galleries, 160, 162  
 Gallwey, Capt., 3  
 Galvano, Antonio, 1  
 Game, of Warri, 154; children's, 154  
 Gangan the hunter, 144  
 Gates, town, 158, 160  
 Goats, 148; sacrificed to prevent arrival of white man, 69  
 God, reason for not adoring, 51; of health, 53, 71, 72; attention called by a rattle, 72  
 Gold, ornaments, 31; mines, why not worked, 143  
 Golgotha, a, 63, 66  
 Gomez, Fernao, 4  
 Gooras, *see* Kola nuts  
 Grasses, native, 16  
 Great Lords, *see* Big Men  
 Green herbs, fetish, 49; as medicine, 151  
 Guinea fowl, 144  
 Guns, 125  
 Gwato (Gato, Guatun, Egatun, Gotton, Ugato) first description of, 5; not place of first arrival of Europeans, 53; foundation of, 53; spirit of, 57  
 Hagen, Dr. Carl, 4  
 Hair dressing, 18, 19, 20, 21; coral, 80; of king, iii.; of king's wives, xiii.  
 Hangers, 125  
 Harlem, Benin compared with, 160  
 Harp, 153  
 Hausa type of house, 184  
 Hawk's bells, 222, 223  
 Head, heart and lights, used as fetish by hunters, 145  
 Head making, Adubowa's, 100; Ahuraku's, 75, 76  
 Heads, bronze, 218  
 Health God, 53, 71, 72  
 Heeren or Keizersgracht canals, comparison with, 160  
 Heger, Dr. Fraser, 4  
 Hemsted, Thos., 2  
 Henderson, 3  
 Henry Dr., 3  
 Herbs, as fetish, 49; as medicine, 157  
 Hilliard, 3  
 Hoe, 132  
 Homo-grans, *see* Big Men  
 Honesty, 47  
 Horns, 153; made of elephant tusks, 77  
 Horses, 148; how ridden, 107, 108  
 Houses, 158; general arrangements, 168; internal arrangements, 184, 187; Hausa, 184; on Gold Coast, 186  
 Hot copper ordeal, 87  
 Human blood sprinkled on altars, etc., 72, 76, 79  
 Human corpse, 65; devoured by turkey buzzard, 63; decomposed, 173; buried in walls, 217  
 Human eye on pathway, 65  
 Human sacrifices, 15, 49, 52, 57, 68, 167, 169, x.; frequency of, 66; of Albinos, 19; 400-500 a year, 72; first mention of, 63; to the sea, 63; introduced by King Eureka, 70; bad people only sacrificed, 70, 71; attempt to prevent, 63, 79, 86; prevented by C. Punch, 66; on king's inheritance, 98; on king's accession, 101; on completion of compound, 102; lessened by export of slaves, 103  
 Human skulls lying about like pebbles, 63  
 Humiliation before king, 109, 111, 112, 113, 123  
 Humour not expressed in art, 209  
 Hunters' privileges, 145; fetish tree, 187  
*Hypoelytrum nemorum*, 142  
*Hyperperexia*, 3  
 Ibodudu's prophesy, 71  
 Idol, real, 78  
 Ife the Oni of, 6; Bini send to Ife for a king, 7  
 Ijos (Jos, Ejaus, Jomen), 6, 25  
*Impluvium*, 117, 167, 168  
 Imports, Dutch, 133; French, 133, 137; English, 138  
*Indigofera endacaphylla*, 142  
 Income of king, 96  
 Ingram, Anthonie, 2  
 Inheritance, 97; of crown, 98; in Yoruba, xxi  
 Invisible, hunters have charms to make, 145  
 Iron pins to mark flood level, 55  
 Iron, roof, 171, 172, 173; smelting, 232  
 Ivory, built up into figures, 44; catch 177; bolts, 188; trade in 193; staff, 196; masks, 199; statuettes, 199; sistrum, 205; armlets, 205  
 Jabou, *see* Ojoma (War Captain)  
 Jacolliot, 3  
 Ja-ja rose from a slave, 105  
 Jambra succeeds to throne and takes name of Atolo, 100  
 Jasper *see* Coral  
 Jealousy, 38  
 Jug, brass, 219  
 Juju, men *versus* doctors, 151; room in every house, 171; place, 172, 173  
 Katunga, King of, related to King of Benin, 13  
 King, Lieut. John, 3

- Kings of Benin, list of 6; average reign of, 7; is fetish, 62; does not require food nor sleep, 62; could turn into a bird, 62; serves out saucewood, 88; reverence for, 109; prowls about at night, 65; only can confer right to be clothed, 24; authority, 91, 92; everybody his property, 101; can sell his subjects, 103; wives, 74; wives' coral, 115; women slaves, 108; claims male children, 40, 117; orders chief to kill himself, 85; cutlass held before him, 116, 117; claims first tusk, 144; income 96; finger nail, 113; coral, 113; court, 159, 160, 162; compound, 169, 171; stools, 112, 113; boys (Ukoba), 94; their nakedness, 111, 117, 118, 123; access to difficult, 92; his understudy, 101; interviews with, 109 *et seq*; his presents covered up, 110; burial, 43; brothers killed at accession, 99; human sacrifices at accession, 101; speaks Portuguese, 109
- King Overami sick of sacrifices and promise regarding, 66; ruins country, 175; makes submission, xiii; attempts escape, xvii; his capture and exile, xviii
- Knowledge kept from the king, 92
- Kissing, 99; the fetish, 79
- Kola nuts, 59, 148, presented, 114, 128, 130
- Labarthe, P., 3
- Lambert, Nicholas, 2
- Lamps, 120, 121; candelabra, 173
- Landers, The, references to Benin, 13
- Landolphe, Capt. J. F., 2
- Landolphia* rubber plants, 3
- Land, cultivation and measure, 143; tenure, xxi
- Lascivious dancing, 78
- Latania Lodigessii*, 164
- Layers of clay in walls, 178
- Laziness, cause of, 46; of chiefs, 47
- Leather Jacks, 59
- Leather dressers, 140
- Legends, village, 55
- Leglets, 31
- Legroing, 3
- Legs, how depicted in metal work, 220
- Leopard spots, how depicted, 221, 222
- Leopards, tame, 74
- Lex Talionis*, 86
- Libations at tombs, 42, 59
- Libidinousness, 45
- Lizards, dried, 131
- Locke, E., 4
- Locks or bolts, 187, 188
- Lolocou, devil, 78
- Lonchocarpus sericeus*, 142
- Long Dane gun, 144
- "Long juju" (water ordeal), 87
- Looking-glass, 173, 174, 214.
- Looms, 141
- Louers (louvres), 160
- Lubo (Ologbo), village of, 11; spirit of, 53
- Luschan, Prof. von, 4
- McNaught, Dr., 3
- Maize, 147
- "Making one's father" (yearly sacrifice to the father), 70, 72, 74
- Making one's head (Luck), 76
- Malaku, making, 19; spirit of the big water, 53; causes flood, 55; impersonation of Orisha, 55; appears as an old man, 57; house altar, 59, 78
- Male children are king's property, 40, 117
- Manillas, 5, 6, 142
- Marees, Pieter de, 1
- Markets, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 162; tray of women, 145
- Marriage conferred by the king, 24, 37
- Masked men, 43, 44, 78; *see also* Disguised Men
- Massacre, Philips', 3, 4; vestiges of, xii.
- Massacres on king's succession, 99, 101
- Master, wood and ivory carver, 4
- Mat making, 140, 141, 142
- Measurements of cloths, 141; of land, 143
- Mercadors*, 95, 136
- Metal castings mentioned by Gallwey and Lander, 217
- Mezzo relieve* work, 167
- Milbio (millet), 147
- Millipede, superstition about, 84
- Miller Bros., 3
- Ministers of Finance, Trade and War, 93
- Mission, Phillips', 3, 4
- Missionaries, first arrival of, 6; attempt to prevent human sacrifice, 63
- Moffat and Smith, 3
- Monkey, roast, 131; flesh, 148; head, 167
- Moor, Consul-General, Sir Ralph, K.C.M.G., 3, 4
- Moors arrive at Benin, 234
- Moringa pterygosperinia*, 161
- Mouths of victims skewered, 67
- Mud altar; *see* cones
- Muntz metal, 102; roof, 176
- Murder, rampant, 65; punishment for, 86
- Music, 153
- Muskets, 125
- Mythical people, 12
- Nana, chief of Brohoemi, 26, 27, 142, 161
- Nakedness at court, 24; *see also* Ukoba
- Neglect of old age, 47
- Neptune of Wars, 169
- Newbouldia laevis*, 187, xxiv.
- New Guinea, comparison of art with, 213
- Newton, John, 2
- News, quick conveyance of, 96
- Night prowling of the king, 65; victims captured during, 66
- Nobles, how raised, 65; herds of, 94

- Nyendaël, D.V., 2; court reception like C. Punch's, 119  
 Oath of friendship, 61  
 Oba (obba), King, 94  
 Obadesogbo, death of, xvi.  
 Obahawie taken prisoner, xv., shot xvi.  
 Obaiuwana commits suicide, xv.  
 Obamoe, 94  
 Obaradesagmo, 94, 100  
 Obaseke, 94  
 Oberstein agate works, 27  
 Occupation of the people, 47  
 Ochudi's compound, 173, 175  
 Ochterton, 3  
 Odobowa; *see* Adubowa  
 Ogilby, 2  
 Ogiwo, god of health, 71; dead people go to him, 72  
 Ojoma (Ojomo, Ojumo), 18, 65, 100, 101, 130; human sacrifice, 79; compound of, 173, 175; an independent king, 94  
 Okerison, sacrifices, 57; festival, 65; executioners, 74, 95  
 Old age, neglect of, 47  
 Old-man-with-bag spirit (Malaku), 57  
 Ologbo creek, where Europeans first arrived, 12, 53  
 Olubasherì (Ologboshèrì), head fighting man, 65, 94  
 Ologboshèrì condemned, xvi.; captured and shot, xvii.  
 Onegwa, the, 98  
 Ongongue; *see* Ewagwe  
 Oni, the, of Ife, ancestor of Kings of Benin, 13  
 Ordeals, 39, 86 *et seq.*  
 Orders of king not carried out, 92  
 Orgies, 77  
 Origin, of Bini architecture, 184; of castings, 233  
 Orisa (Orishi) god, 49, 55  
 Ornaments, personal, 24-34  
 Oro, 50; voice of, 64, 65; bull roarer, 65; grove, 55, 169  
 Orukotu, the king's brother, 95; loses his birthright, 100, 101  
 Osebu, king's son's court, 98  
 Osogboa, drives out Alagwe juju, 53; orders plaques to be made, 230  
 Ossade (Uchudi), 91  
 Owe Asserry: *see* War Captain  
 Paan (Pagnes, Panen), 23, 137, 138, 139  
 Palaver, xiii.  
 Palma Christi, 151  
 Palm, wine, 130, 149; oil, 131, 138; leaf roof, 160, 165  
*Panicum horizontale*, 16  
 Parades, annual of kings', 74, 95  
 Pardon wine, 40, 76, 130, 149  
 Parrots, to eat, 131; tame, 187  
 "Parson" Ahuraku, 54; son, 118  
*Passador*, 52, 93, 111, 135  
*Patærae*, architectural, 219  
 Path strewn with decomposing human bodies, 66  
 Paton, 3  
 Pawns; *see* Paan  
 Pereira, Duarte Pecheco, 1  
 Periodical sickness, 39  
 Pepper, 4, 5, 131, 143, 147  
 Pharmacopia, 151  
 Phillips, Vice-Consul, 3, 4  
 Phosphor matches, fetish, 89  
 Physique, 17, i.; strength, 19  
*Physostoma venenosa*, 155  
 Pigs, 148  
 Pillars covered with cast copper, engraved (plaques), 160, 162, 176  
 Pima, Ruy de, 1  
 Pinteado, Francisco, 1, 2  
 Pipes, 141  
 Piries, Durate, 6  
*Piscina*, 118, 167  
 Pitch, or pitchy substance, 102, 188  
 Pits, 63; full of dead bodies, 68; captives rescued from, 68, 69; seventeen, 69, 102; foul, 169; victims thrown in, 169; for victims, 171, 175, 188, xii.  
 Pitt-Rivers, Gen., F.R.S., 4, xviii.  
 Plaques, 218; introduced by Osogboa, 230; in British Museum, 232  
 Plates (platters), inlaid in walls, 67, 170  
*Pluviarium*, 187  
 Poison, 3, 144, 151; 46, 47, 199; arrows, 47, 125  
 Police, 85  
 Polished clay bench, 57; shiney and smooth walls, 160, 161, 166, 177  
*Polypoterus bichir*, 219  
 Poniards, 125  
 Poor people, bodies thrown into the bush, 42; supported, 46  
 Population, 14  
 Porcelain inlaid in walls, 67, 170  
 Pots, earthen, 75  
 Poultry, 148  
 Powis, 3  
 Presents to the king covered up, 110  
 Pressure drum, 205, 210  
 Priests sent to Benin, 5; every one his own, 50; poverty of, 151  
 Primogeniture not an African institution, 101  
 Prisoners, how secured, 68; chained to floor, 187  
 Privileges of hunters, 145  
 Processions; *see* parades  
 Prophecy of Ibodudu, 71  
 Proverb, curious, 12  
 Prophylactics, 62  
 Punch, Cyril, 3; court reception similar to Nyendaël's, 119

- Punishment for loss of battle, 127  
 Punitive Expedition, The, 4  
 Purchase price of slave, 104, 105  
 Pyramids *see* Towers  
 Queen Mother, the, 119  
 Queen's court, 160  
 Quesné, J. S., 2  
 Quick, R., 4  
 Rafters, roof timbers, 163, 165, 173, 176-178  
 Rain God, sacrifice, 71, 72  
 Rape, 39  
 Rapiers, 125  
 Rattles, 108, 153  
 Rattle sticks on altars, 68; to call attention of the gods, 72  
 Rats to eat, 131  
 Rawson, Commander Sir Harry, K.C.B., 4  
 Read, C. H., Keeper of Antiquities, British Museum, 4, xviii., xxi.  
 Realistic representations, 233, 234  
 Refined features of the Bini, 18  
 Relief work, 167, 174  
 Reservedness, 46  
 Revenues of the king, 96  
 Rezende, Garcia De, 1  
 Rich men despoiled, 46  
 Riding method, 107  
*Rhizophora* sp., 143  
 Roads kept in order, 169; *see* Streets  
 Roman architecture, comparison with, 167, 171, 177, 184, 187  
 Romano, Francis da, 2  
 Roof of *latanier* (*natanier*) leaves, 163  
 Roofs, 160, 163, 164, 166, 171, 172, 173, 176, 177; *see* Rafters  
 Rosettes on castings, 219, 233  
 Roupell, Capt., E.P.S., D.S.O., 4  
 Ruins, 162, 167, 169, 171  
 Sabbath, the, every fifth day, 52  
*Sacella*, 59; *sacellum*, 169  
 Sacrifices; *see* Human Sacrifices  
 Sacrificial trees, 51, 52, 54, 64, 66, 69  
 St. Thomas, Isl., 2  
 Salt, discovery of, 53; discovered by Osogboa, 53, 142; how obtained, 142, 143; as a medium of exchange, 142; for dyeing, 142  
 Salutations, 83, 123  
 Sandra, Jan, 1  
 Saseri; *see* War Captain  
 Saucewood ordeal, 88  
 Scaffold used in hunting, 145  
*Scitamineæ*, 143  
 Sea, future life in, 52; sacrifices to, 53, 63  
 Seasayre; *see* War Captain  
 Sequeira, Ruy de, 4  
 Sheep, 148  
 Shells used as spoons, 148  
 Shellu, king's son's court, 99  
 Shields, or fans, 107, 125, 127  
 Shingle roofs, 163, 163, 164  
 Ships arrival notified, 135, 136  
 Singing, 153  
 Sister's son succeeds, 99  
 Sistrum, ivory, 205; brass, 221  
 Size of City, 160  
 Skin, colour, 17, 18, 19, 65, 80; marks (incisions), 6, 33, 91,  
 Slaves (captives), 5; immolated at burials, 41; of king, 91; villages, 103; with physical defects, 103; males only exported, 103; trade, decay of, 104; unhappiness of, 104; purchase price of, 104, 138; rise to prosperity, 105; task work, 143  
 Smith and Moffat, 3  
 Smiths, 140; shops, 175  
 Smell of human blood, 171; fearful, 175 awful xi  
 Snake on roof, 44; 162, 163, 164, 165, 172, 173, 175  
 Soap (sope), 131, 134, 143  
 Sobo, 6; fetish, 200  
 Soldierly, 126, 127  
 Son first reported to father inherits, 100  
 Sorrento, Merrola da, 2  
 Spears, 125  
 Sphyrelaton work, 199  
 Spinning machines, 141  
 Spirit of old man with bag, 57  
 Spirits annually driven out, 55  
*Spondens lutea*, 142  
 Spoons, shells used as, 148  
 Spurheeledness, 205  
 Stables, 159  
 Staff, carved, 196, 219  
 Star, Prof. Fred., 4  
 Starvation, a woman dying of, 47  
 State secrets divulged, 86  
 Statuettes, ivory, 199, 200  
 Steeples *see* Towers  
 Stench from decomposing human bodies, 63, 68, 69; *see* Smell  
*Sterculia acuminata*, 59, 142, 148 xxiv; *see* Kola  
 Stools, King's, 112  
 Storms destructive to buildings, 159 167  
 Stranger's burial, 42  
 Street kings, 92; or lords, 93  
 Streets and roads very clean, 162, 163, 164, 169; unknown, 167; not straight, 180  
*Strophanthus* sp., 125, 144  
*Struchium Africanum*, 151  
 Styles, in castings, two, 224; indigenous, 234  
 Sun god, sacrifice to, 71, 72  
 Swords, 125  
 Tambourines, 99  
 Tapestry, 110, 141, 163  
*Telamones*, 169

- Terrorism of king's boys, 94  
 Theft, thievishness, 45, 46, 47; theft, punishment for, 86  
 Tiele, *Mémoire Bibliographique*, 1  
 Title, why given, 65; entails duties at court, 65  
 Tobacco consumed, 113; grown, 189  
 Tombs, 13, 42, 44  
 Tongue and quill ordeal, 86, 88  
 Torture, 84  
 Towers, (pyramids, spires, turrets), 160, 161, 162, 163, 167, 189  
 Town, gates, 158, 160; wall, 160, 162, 175  
 Trade, 9; minister for, 93; liberty to, 96; ceremonies, 135; rights, 136; relations, 234  
 Trees planted in compounds, 181, 187  
 Tribute payers, 13  
 Turkey buzzards, 169  
 Turkeys, images of, 168  
 Turtle, sacred, 54  
 Turrets *see* Towers  
 Twins, destruction of, 35, 55  
 Tusks, 44, 79, 131, 192-196; perforated for horns, 77; on altars, 79, 80; on bronze heads, 79; how supported, 82; on ivory pedestals, 110; on copper heads, 162; the property of the king, 96; the first to fall claimed by the king, 144; price of, 138, 139  
 Ubini, Eweke's slave, 8  
 Ukoba, king's boys, 54, 94, 100, 123, 191  
 Umbrella, carried by the Ojomo, 94  
 Understudy to the king, 101  
 Unhappiness of slaves, 104  
 Unkindness to children unusual, 104  
 Upper storeys of houses, 161  
 Usu taken prisoner, xv.; shot, xvi.  
*Vailyes* (Veilles), 95, 135  
 Variety of designs and ornamentation, 233  
 Veilles; *see* *Vailyes*  
 Ventriloquists, 57  
 Victim escapes owing to shape of head, 69; kept in stock, 65; cruelty to, 65; how captured, 66; numbers of, 69; deserve death, 72; do not resist, 66; callous behaviour of, 74, 82, 84; gagged, mouths skewered, 67, 71, 76, 78, 80; physical defects of, 82, 103; privileges, 84  
 Village legends, 55  
 Vindicativeness, 46  
 Vossius, Isaak, 2  
 Vultures devour the dead, 42  
 Wall, town, 160, 162, 175; of houses, 164; building, 158; how built, 181; of clay, 162; ribbed, 128, 167; fluted, 177; polished, 160, 161, 166, 177; courses, 172; with plates inlaid, 67, 170; with cowries, 128, 170; castings and human bodies buried in, 217; washed down by rain, 159  
 Wands (staves) peeled on altars, 70, 109, 110  
 War, 126; minister, 93  
 War Captain (commander in chief), 65; Ollubusheri, 94; post inherited, 101; drunk, 130; his house and ancestors, 128; his power, 128  
 Warme St., Amsterdam, comparison with, 157  
 Warri (Owhere, Ouarre) and Benin one kingdom, 7; description of, 12; how founded, 100  
 Warri, game of, 154  
 Washing feet, ceremony of, 115, 123, 128  
 Water, spirit, 53, 90; fetish to the Bini, 84; ordeal, 87; provided for travellers, 11; where obtained, 149; wells, 161, 173; path, 173  
 Weaving, 140  
 Welsh, Jas., 2  
 Western Sudan, comparison with, 184  
 Well, 161; *see* Pits  
 Whistles, 153  
 White men, tradition of first arrival, 9; at Ologbo Creek, 12  
 White woman, not known, 11; marries King of Warri, 15  
 Wicker fish pots, 143  
 Widows cannot marry without son's leave, 37; how disposed of, 97  
 Wine, palm, 149  
 Windam, 1  
 Windows, none, 165, 167  
 Witchcraft, prisoners, 65; woman accused of, 84  
 Wives, plurality of, 37; inheritance of, 37; desire to be sacrificed at burial of husband, 43  
 Woman sacrificed to rain god, 71; mutilated, 69; killed for witchcraft, 84  
 Women not so good looking as the men, 16; the king's property, 24; do not cohabit with Europeans, 37; set to ensnare the Jekri men, 45; dishonesty of, 47; may not enter fetish huts, 57; offerings, 82; chant at sacrifice, 82; happiness of slave women, 104; excluded from election of king, 99; traders, 132, 134; not allowed to enter European traders' sheds, 135; market tray, 145  
 Wood, fetish, 49; spirit, 55  
 Woods, coloured, exported, 143  
 Woodwork, carved, 209  
 Woollen stuffs, 141  
 Woolly hair, how depicted, 221, 222, 223  
 Yaceri: *see* War Captain  
 Yams, 131, 134, 147, 148; new, feast of, 57, 72, 76  
 Yearly sacrifices, 70  
 Yoruba, curse, 43; architecture, limits of, 182  
 Zoological forms in carving, 209













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